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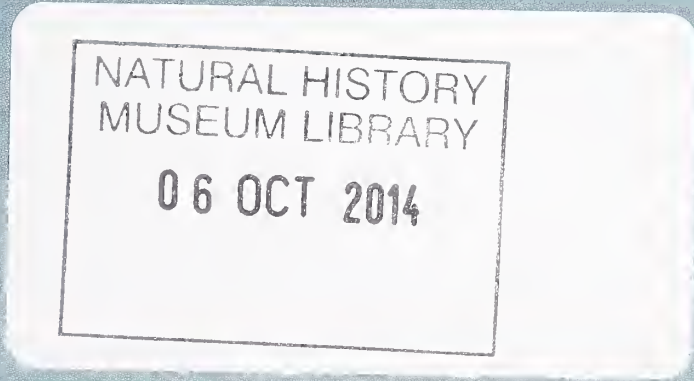


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Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2013



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Front-cover photograph: Juvenile Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*,
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British Birds

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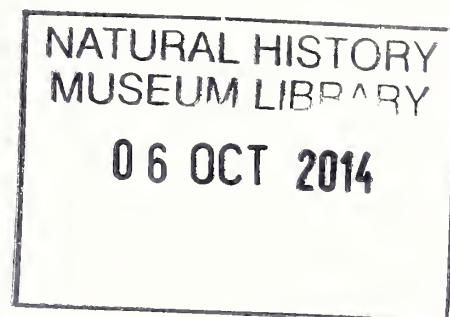
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The BBRC report has dominated my desk for several weeks now, and both Nigel Hudson and I will be relieved to see this one completed. It is another mammoth effort on behalf of all concerned and, with more pages and more photos than ever before, it hopefully provides a gripping summary of another enthralling year. The plethora of photographs is nothing new, although the task of whittling down the bewildering variety of images of the more popular rarities is now one of the most time-consuming aspects of this report. By the same token, the continuing decline in sketches and artwork submitted in support of records is sad to see.

One other aspect of the report is at a record high and that is the phrase 'DNA analysis'. It's a record that looks set to be broken regularly in the coming years. The rise of what Martin Collinson – responsible for most if not all of the said DNA analysis reported – likes to call 'CSI birding' will not please some traditionalists – but then neither were some folk pleased to see the digital camera (nor, probably, the internal combustion engine either). Admittedly, constant taxonomic upheaval and the regular reordering of species is a fag to keep abreast of, but it seems likely that this particular genie is not going back in its bottle and we may as well be positive about it. While the current BBRC report was on the cutting table, news came through of a batch of four 2014 Subalpine Warblers that Martin and his team had analysed, which included Britain's fourth 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' and the first record of a Subalp from the southern Italian population. And that might leave some readers cold, but surely the challenge in front of us is to do what the BBRC comment writer on pp. 623–624 of this year's report advocates – to marry the lab work with our traditional field skills and see if we can take field recognition of some groups to new levels.

One thing is for sure, to cross reference to a separate item in this issue – Ian Newton's exploration of whether bird ringing is still relevant in the twenty-first century: birders with a good old-fashioned ringing licence are still very much in demand.

Roger Riddington



British Birds aims to: ❖ provide an up-to-date magazine for everyone interested in the birds of the Western Palearctic; ❖ publish a range of material on behaviour, conservation, distribution, ecology, identification, movements, status and taxonomy as well as the latest ornithological news and book reviews; ❖ maintain its position as the journal of record; and
❖ interpret scientific research on birds in an easily accessible way.

Is bird ringing still necessary?

Hardly a month passes without a startling new map appearing on some website showing the impressive movements of a bird, as studied with the help of modern technology. Tracking tagged birds from satellites has now given us the ability to follow individuals from day to day on their migrations, wherever in the world they travel. From samples of such tagged individuals, we can also calculate mortality rates during different periods of the year or year-round. Not surprisingly, some people are now asking whether, with all the new methodology, old-style bird ringing is still necessary. In my view, the answer to this question is an emphatic 'yes'. In this editorial, I shall first mention the various methods of marking and tracking birds, and then go on to explain why I think that bird ringing is still essential to the development of both bird science and bird conservation.

Bird ringing dates back to 1899, when Hans Christian Cornelius Mortensen, a Danish schoolmaster, produced the first metal bird rings carrying a unique number and an address, which he attached to birds in his home area. His innovation gave a way of turning anonymous birds into recognisable individuals, identifiable as such for the rest of their lives. Ringing spread quickly, and soon became a mainstay of migration studies worldwide, revealing previously unknown migration routes to an astonished world. Only much later, in the 1940s, did ring-recoveries come to be used to estimate the annual survival rates of birds. The initial method involved comparing, for particular species, the numbers of individuals ringed as chicks that were subsequently reported dead at different ages by members of the public. From the ratios of birds reported in their first to second year, second to third year, third to fourth year, and so on, the annual survival of different age groups could be calculated. Since then, more sophisticated statistical methods have been developed which can make use of information from birds ringed at any age, whether they are reported dead or alive.

Large numbers of birds must usually be

ringed in order to provide a small number of recoveries, but the average recovery rate for birds ringed in Britain of 2% belies great variation between species and regions. Most small birds have recovery rates of less than 1% (excluding personal recaptures by the ringers themselves), but some larger birds can yield recovery rates of 20% or more, especially if they are hunted. In addition, recovery rates can vary markedly along migration routes, and it is generally difficult to get recoveries from tropical wintering areas. Many records are needed to provide a worthwhile picture of the migration routes or survival rates of particular species. The situation can be improved by the use of coloured rings or tags that can be read in the field from live birds without recapturing them, providing repeated records from the same individuals. But, as with ring-recoveries, reporting rates can also be biased geographically.

Following ringing, another breakthrough in the study of bird movements was the development in the 1960s of small radio transmitters that could be fixed to birds, revealing their locations over distances of up to a few kilometres. Radio tags can be attached using a harness or fixed to a ring or a tail feather, and require an observer with a receiver and antenna to detect the signals. Now available in weights down to 0.2 g, such tags are used mainly to follow birds and other animals around small areas, such as their breeding territories.

From the mid 1980s, tags became available that transmitted automatically to satellites. By continually circling the globe, Argos satellites can detect signals from anywhere below, and then transmit the locations to a ground station. This technology enables birds to be monitored day by day on their journeys from breeding to wintering areas and back again, anywhere in the world. It provides almost real-time information on migration routes and timing, stopover locations and durations, flight speeds, wind and weather effects, and orientation abilities. For some species, previously unknown breeding or wintering

areas have been detected, and some amazing journeys have been revealed (notably the non-stop trans-Pacific flights of godwits from Alaska to New Zealand). The earliest suitable transmitters for use on birds (called platform transmitter terminals, or PTTs) weighed more than 100 g so they could be used only on large birds, but development continued and, using solar power, PTTs are now available down to 5 g, with even smaller ones predicted for the future. They are currently used by BTO researchers to track Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* to their African wintering areas (see www.bto.org/cuckoos). Tags are also now available which combine satellite with Global Positioning System (GPS) technology to give yet more precise location estimates than earlier tags.

The main drawbacks of satellite-based methods are the high costs of the units and the subsequent data processing by the service provider (up to about £3,000 per bird per year). The weight of the tags also means that they have so far been used chiefly on larger bird species, such as raptors, waterfowl and seabirds. Ideally, such units should weigh no more than 3% of the bird's weight – less than a meal – in order not to affect the bird's migratory behaviour significantly.

Cheaper, and lighter, types of 'geolocator' tags have been developed over the last decade which store the collected data on board. One type (GLS) uses a photo-sensor and takes repeated measurements of the ambient light intensity so that the time of local sunrise and sunset can be calculated. These data allow us to estimate the approximate geographical position of the bird at different dates (latitude from daylength and date, and longitude from times of dawn and dusk relative to Greenwich Mean Time). Because they do not transmit information, such devices need only a small battery and can thus weigh less than 1 g; the big drawback, however, is that the bird needs to be recaptured to retrieve the data. The units are inexpensive (around £100), but the need to recatch the wearers means that some tags are never recovered, which increases overall costs. Another drawback is that, because of the gradual onset of dawn and variation in cloud cover, location reliability is less than with satellite tags (some estimates can be in error by more than 200 km), but this may be

acceptable in tracking long-distance migrations. GLS tags were used by BTO researchers to map the migration routes of Common Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos*.

Recently a second, more expensive, type of geolocator has become available which uses an on-board GPS to obtain accurate locations from satellites at pre-set intervals. Although the bird usually has to be recaptured to retrieve the information, in some situations the data can be downloaded via VHF or the mobile telephone network if the bird comes within range of a base station. Initially, the weight of these tags (5–10 g) meant that they could be fixed only to larger birds. They have recently been used to map seabird feeding areas around Britain, providing information for the designation of Marine Protected Areas or the licensing of offshore windfarms. The latest devices weigh 1–2 g but then provide only a limited number of locations. Because the locations determined by GPS are accurate to within 10 m, the method can be used to gain precise assessments of a bird's home range at different seasons, as well as its migration routes and stopping sites. Used in conjunction with high-powered satellite images or aerial photographs (such as those available from Google Earth), a bird tracked using GPS can be placed accurately within a landscape thousands of kilometres from the researcher. These various methods provide a much more complete picture of bird migratory and ranging behaviour than could ever be obtained from ringing. They have revolutionised the study of bird migration.

Owing to the costs involved, these new methods are normally used only in funded research programmes, involving small numbers of birds, from a limited range of species, over a limited number of localities and years. Ringing is also not cheap, considering that only a small proportion of the rings applied produce recoveries. But traditionally the cost of ringing in Britain has been borne (for the most part willingly) mainly by the ringers themselves. It is hard to imagine that such a massive database could have been accumulated over the years in any other way. Ringing can be applied to species of any size, year after year, on a large spatial scale (nation-wide or greater), with the results continually added to an ever-growing long-term database.

Moreover, the biometrics collected when birds are handled in large numbers provide valuable insight into other aspects of bird biology, such as breeding and moult, body weights, age and sex ratios, and even the incidence of disease.

Ring data have shown their value in recent decades, when many bird populations declined, mainly through human impacts of one sort or another, and some species have also changed their migration patterns. If we are to detect and understand these changes, and take effective conservation measures, we need appropriate data. When birds decline, it is helpful to know whether reduced survival or reduced reproductive output is involved. For example, in most small seed-eating species in Britain, population declines in recent decades were associated with reduced survival, whereas in some other species survival stayed the same over a period of decline, suggesting that reduced reproduction was involved (Newton 2013). This knowledge in turn indicates where conservation measures should be directed, in breeding or wintering areas.

Even if ring-recoveries are insufficient for annual assessments, they can be pooled into blocks of years, comprising, for example, periods of population stability or increase and periods of decline. This type of retrospective analysis applied to farmland birds helped to identify the causal factors involved in the declines of different species, and is now being applied to some of our struggling migrants. Such analyses can come only from large-scale, long-term data, such as those provided by ringing schemes. Another advantage of ringing, as it is now organised in Britain, is that it can cover all species all the time, not just those of current interest, and we can never know which ones will be in trouble in future.

Ongoing ringing is like having money in the bank, ready when needed. Only the presence of individuals that are already ringed in populations enables us to assess, for example, the provenance of seabirds killed in winter wrecks, the spread and impact of new diseases such as trichomonosis, or the risk of alien diseases (such as the H5N1 strain of avian influenza) reaching Britain.

Some bird species are becoming more

sedentary than in the past, or shortening their migrations to winter at higher latitudes than previously, presumably in association with climate change. It would have been difficult, in the absence of ringing, to have recorded most of these changes. Nor would it have been discovered that the Blackcaps *Sylvia atricapilla* now wintering in small numbers in Britain are not drawn from among the birds that breed here, but derive from a different population, breeding nearer to central Europe. In view of the continual changes in our avifauna, I would argue that cost-effective data from centralised ringing schemes are just as necessary now as they always were to detect and understand these changes, enabling in some cases appropriate conservation measures to be taken.

People are often dazzled by technological innovations and tend to overlook the less charismatic new analytical techniques that are allowing much better use of ringing results to help explain population trends in demographic terms. The most recent BTO studies combine data from ringing, nest records and counting schemes to produce demographic models of bird populations that give unprecedented detail on large-scale population dynamics (Robinson *et al.* 2014). Similarly, the development of more systematic and standardised site-specific ringing-recapture programmes is allowing much more powerful analyses of year-to-year survival and population changes. New technology has not replaced ringing but it has greatly expanded our toolkit. It is the *combination* of methodologies that has given such exciting recent developments in our understanding of bird populations and movements, and helped so much in bird conservation.

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Ian Newton

For ease in reporting ring-recoveries, visit www.ring.ac

What do you think? Join the debate at www.britishbirds.co.uk/category/editorials

News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

Alder Flycatcher added to the British List

The BOU Records Committee has accepted the North American *Empidonax* flycatcher that was seen – and trapped – at Nanjizal, Cornwall, in October 2008 as Alder Flycatcher *E. alnorum* and added the species to Category A of the British List (see also pp. 614–615).

In a brief statement, the BOURC said: ‘This Nearctic species, breeding in North America and wintering in South America, was previously one of a subspecies pair of “Traill’s Flycatcher”. Both have been elevated to full specific status as Alder Flycatcher and Willow Flycatcher *Empidonax traillii*, based mainly on differences in song and call, but with some subtle plumage differences.

‘This created a challenge for BOURC when

establishing the identity of this individual, despite it being trapped and biometrics being available, as no definitive calls were heard. The record required two circulations, before Willow Flycatcher could be eliminated and identification confirmed.’

A subsequent ‘empid’ on Blakeney Point, Norfolk, in September 2010 has also been accepted as Alder Flycatcher by BBRC.

The addition of this species to the British List takes the total to 597. All suggestions for the 600th British bird will be gratefully received by N&c. The imminent (?) split of Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans* into three separate species would leave the List poised at 599...

5,000 homes approved at England’s key Nightingale site

The RSPB has asked the Secretary of State to examine the decision by Medway Council in North Kent to approve an outline planning application for the development of 5,000 homes on Lodge Hill, a nationally protected site designated for its breeding population of Common Nightingales *Luscinia megarhynchos*.

Medway Council’s Planning Committee approved the Outline Planning Application for the development of 5,000 homes on the 330-ha Chat-tenden Woods and Lodge Hill SSSI. The decision would destroy 144 ha of the SSSI, one of the largest losses of a SSSI since the Wildlife and Countryside Act came into force in 1981. The decision is in direct conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Mike Clarke, the RSPB’s Chief Executive, grew up in North Kent and knows the area and its wildlife well. He said: ‘Lodge Hill is a protected site and one of the most important in the country for Nightingales... The Council failed to demonstrate to an independent inspector last year that there is no alternative, or that the development outweighs the damage to this unique site. We don’t believe that the loss of this site to housing is in the national interest and we will be campaigning against this decision, including asking the Secretary of State to intervene and examine Medway Council’s decision.

The NPPF contains important tests to ensure that sites of significant environment value are damaged only in circumstances where there is no

alternative and where the need for development clearly outweighs the impacts. Mike Clarke added: ‘We firmly believe that the Lodge Hill Outline Planning Application has never been consistent with national planning policy and we trust this view will be upheld by the Secretary of State.’

Lodge Hill was designated as a SSSI by Natural



Paul Hobson/FLPA

276. Singing male Common Nightingale *Luscinia megarhynchos*, Lincolnshire, spring 2006.

England for its Nightingales, as it holds more than 1% of the entire UK breeding population. Between 1995 and 2008, the UK's Nightingale population declined by 53%. Mike Clarke added: 'The plans to displace the 84 pairs of breeding Nightingales to a site in Essex are unscientific, unprecedented, and

over-optimistic. There is no scientific evidence that gives confidence to the idea that they will successfully move to the proposed new site. This interpretation of the NPPF weakens the Government's environmental will and poses a serious threat of development to other SSSIs.'

Hen Harriers – the Government responds

Mark Avery's e-petition <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/65627> calling for a ban on driven grouse shooting has now attracted 17,000 signatures. When it passed the 10,000-mark it triggered a (lengthy) Government response. Here's a shortened version:

'It has been estimated that £250 million per year is spent on management activities that provide significant benefits for conservation. Shooting makes an important contribution to the rural economy.

'It is encouraging to learn that there are four Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus* nests this year which have chicks, given that in 2013 there were no known Hen Harrier fledglings in England. Some of these fledglings will be tracked with satellite tags we have funded.

'The Uplands Stakeholder Forum Hen Harrier Sub-group was set up in 2012 with senior representatives from organisations best placed to take action to address the decline in Hen Harriers. These include Natural England, the Moorland Association, the National Gamekeepers' Organisation, the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, the National Parks Authority and the RSPB. Defra welcomes the involvement of all parties. The Sub-group has developed a draft Joint Action Plan containing a suite of complementary actions intended to contribute to the recovery of the Hen Harrier population in England. We are working with Sub-group members to finalise the Plan.

'The killing of birds of prey is illegal, all wild birds being protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Anyone who kills or injures a wild bird is committing an offence and could face jail if convicted. The National Wildlife Crime Unit gathers intelligence on illegal activities affecting birds of prey, providing assistance to police forces when required. Earlier this year the Government confirmed that the Home Office and Defra would together provide funding until 2016, demonstrating the Government's commitment to tackling

wildlife crime. Alongside this, there have been successful conservation measures which have led to increases in Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Peregrine Falcon *Falco peregrinus* and Red Kite *Milvus milvus* populations over the last two decades.

'We will be investing over £3 billion in agri-environment schemes (Environmental Stewardship and its successor) in the next Rural Development Programme 2015–20. Addressing loss of biodiversity will be a priority for the new Programme. In addition funding will look to maximise opportunities to deliver biodiversity, water quality and flooding benefits together. Defra is working with a wide range of interests to finalise scheme details in good time for 2015.'

Mark's e-petition remains open until 30th March 2015 and will trigger a House of Commons debate should it pass the 100,000-signature threshold. This is his immediate response to Defra: 'Does Defra accept the £250m figure? How much of that figure, which is a UK figure, is spent in England? How much of that sum is agri-environment funding that comes from the taxpayer? And how much is from Natural England and therefore also comes from the taxpayer? And, rather critically to this particular e-petition, how much of that £250m is spent on grouse moors?

'Driven grouse shooting depends on people breaking the law. The large "bags" of Red Grouse [*Lagopus lagopus*] attained in the north of England would not be possible if the law were obeyed. If I'm right, then driven grouse shooting is not a legitimate activity at all – that's one reason we should ban it.

'You don't comment on the fact, mentioned in the e-petition and based on science, that there should be 300+ pairs of Hen Harriers in England if it wasn't for illegal killing of this protected bird. The English Hen Harrier population has fallen under this government. You don't have a plan, you don't have an answer and it appears you don't have a clue. It is also clear that you really don't care.'

Correction

The photograph of a Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmeus* at Slimbridge on the cover of the August issue, and the photographs of other birds and the biosecure facility at Slimbridge in the article itself, were in fact taken by Ken Tucker and supplied by WWT's Baz Hughes, not taken by Baz himself. We apologise to Ken, a great supporter of the captive SBS project, for this error.

BirdLife raises the alarm over vulture declines

BirdLife has announced that vultures have rapidly become one of the most threatened families of birds on the planet. And in a bid to stop this important family of birds from slipping towards extinction in Europe and Africa, the organisation has launched a £20,000 fundraising campaign to 'Stop Vulture Poisoning Now'.

The catastrophic decline of vultures in Asia from poisoning by the veterinary medicine diclofenac in cattle carcasses is a sadly familiar story but vultures in Europe and Africa may be set to follow. Diclofenac is now commercially available in at least two European countries (Italy and Spain – both are strongholds for vultures in Europe), yet this is the same drug that has wiped out 99% of vultures in India, Pakistan and Nepal.

At the same time, vultures in Africa are facing

increasing threats from poisoning (deliberate and accidental), persecution for body parts to be used in traditional medicine, habitat loss, collision with power lines, and more. Across Africa, seven of the 11 vulture species are now listed as Globally Threatened, with species such as Hooded Vulture *Necrosyrtes monachus* recently up-listed to Endangered in 2011.

As a result, BirdLife is calling for support towards a 'Stop Vulture Poisoning Now' conservation campaign: www.justgiving.com/stop-vulture-poisoning-now

'We know what we need to do in Europe – ban veterinary diclofenac,' said Jim Lawrence, BirdLife's Preventing Extinctions Programme Manager. 'We also know what we need to do for Africa – quickly review the fast-changing threats so we can act quickly, with priority.'

Glossy Ibis nesting attempt in Lincs

The latest long-legged bird from the Mediterranean to stake a claim as a British breeding species is the Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* after a pair built a nest at RSPB Frampton Marsh in Lincolnshire. No young were raised but this is believed to be the first recorded nesting attempt by this species in the UK.

RSPB Senior Sites Manager John Badley said: 'We've done a lot of work at Frampton Marsh to bring the wildlife of the Wash closer for people to see and enjoy by creating lots of new wetland habitats. We've been pretty successful, but this wasn't on our radar at all!

'The birds built up a nest platform out of the

water in just a few days, but despite being seen courting and displaying they didn't lay any eggs. This could be the behaviour of immature birds practising before they are mature enough to breed.'

Following regular autumn influxes latterly, Glossy Ibis has been widely predicted as a potential breeder following recent successful nesting in England by Purple Heron *Ardea purpurea*, Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia*, Great White Egret *Ardea alba* and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*. The only surprise is that the first pair didn't choose the Somerset Levels for their breeding attempt!

Bumper year for Northumberland's seabirds

The end-of-term reports from England's most important seabird colonies show that 2014 has been a very productive year. On the Farne Islands, off the Northumberland coast, most seabird species showed significant population increases, with Common Guillemots *Uria aalge* at an all-time high of 51,883 individuals – up 4% on 2013. There were 795 pairs of Shags *Phalacrocorax aris-totelis*, an increase of 37% on last year following the heavy mortality during winter 2012/13, while the total of 639 pairs of Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima* was 16% up on 2013. And there was also welcome news for Kittiwakes *Rissa tridactyla* as the population increased by 21% to 4,175 pairs with good numbers of young fledged, in contrast to recent poor breeding seasons.

The litmus test of every season on the Farnes is the population dynamics of the iconic Puffins *Fratercula arctica*. Happily, it was good news – a

shade under 40,000 pairs (39,962 to be precise): the same figure as last year.

In the terneries, Arctic Terns *Sterna paradisaea* were up 14% to 2,198 pairs and Sandwich Terns *S. sandvicensis* up 16% to 959 pairs. To the south, on Coquet Island, off Amble, the UK's most important Roseate Tern *S. dougallii* population also had an excellent breeding season with 93 pairs, just one pair shy of the all-time high of 94 in 2006. More than 100 chicks were ringed. The proportion of breeding adults that were ringed as pulli on Coquet has increased by 10% annually for the previous five years, and is now over 50%. This suggests that the colony is holding its own, and is not an overflow from populations outside the UK. On 5th July, RSPB Coquet warden Wez Davies spotted a Roseate with an unusual ring: an upside-down Spanish ring! The bird was ringed as an adult at Salinas De La Tapa, Puerto De Santa Maria, Cádiz

on 12th August 2010; the first UK record of a foreign-ringed Roseate Tern, it was most likely on passage to winter quarters in West Africa.

Meanwhile, on the Northumbrian mainland, at the Long Nanny near Beadnell, Little Terns

S. albifrons also had a very good year with 89 chicks fledged. Down the coast at Crimdon Dene in Co. Durham, a further 94 Little Tern chicks were reared, a great result after 50 Little Tern eggs were stolen from the colony in 2013.

First Short-toed Eagle from AD99 – not 1999?

In the light of the recent summering bird in southern England, potentially the third British record, following the first in 1999 and the second in 2011, the following contribution from Bill Bourne may be of interest:

‘A sculpture of an eagle excavated from a Roman roadside ditch in London and now at the Museum of London (*Current Archaeology* 24: 6) is of some interest. It is sufficiently good to suggest the artist had a real

model, and is thought to be made of Cotswold oolitic limestone, so presumably made in this country. It is not substantial for an eagle, and is engaged in wrestling with a snake, which raises the question whether it could be a Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus*, now fairly widespread in southern Europe. This raises the unanswerable question whether it was present in Britain when the climate was better in Roman times, or whether the Romans brought it to Britain.’

The rarest bird photograph?

An extraordinary picture of one of the world’s rarest and least-known birds, the Mascarene Petrel *Pseudobulweria aterrima*, clearly showing the bulge of an unlaidd egg in her lower abdomen, has been captured by Hadoram Shirihai off Réunion, northeast of Madagascar. The expedition returned with the first at-

sea photographs of this species, while the image shown here is thought to be the first of any bird in flight with an obvious egg inside the body.

Mascarene Petrel is Critically Endangered and the expedition to discover where and when it breeds found 33 individuals, of which 12 were photographed. Hadoram said: ‘Against the background of a pinkish-orange sunset, with Réunion Island in the distance, I spotted a petrel through my camera’s viewfinder. Almost immediately I saw the outline of an egg, a huge bump in its belly. I called out to the other expedition members – “she has an egg, she has an egg...!” She flew close to the boat, which gave me the unique chance to photograph her just before the sun set. It was a magical moment, and to think that in less than an hour she would probably lay her egg and contribute to the future survival of this threatened species.’



277. Mascarene Petrel *Pseudobulweria aterrima*, off Réunion, summer 2014.

Bird Photograph of the Year – the people’s vote

The votes from the Rutland jury are in. If you were one of the many people who exercised their franchise and placed a bean in a jar when they visited the BB stand at the Birdfair, you will be interested to know the results of the alternative BPY judging panel. The ‘professional’ judges chose Edmund Fellowes’s Grey Heron *Ardea cinerea* image as the overall winner of BPY 2014 (*Brit. Birds* 107: 446–459) but the citizens’ jury begged to differ.

In first place was Ernie Janes’s Herring Gull *Larus argentatus*, the one seemingly about to be submerged by a breaker on the Norfolk coast (he came second in the actual competition); in second

place was Steve Ward’s Common Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* (equal seventh in BPY); joint third place was claimed by Edmund’s Grey Heron and Oliver Smart’s Common Snipes *Gallinago gallinago* (the latter equal 11th in BPY); fifth place went to Markus Varesvuo’s White-tailed Eagle *Haliaeetus albicilla* and Hooded Crow *Corvus cornix* (equal 11th in BPY); while sixth place with 20 votes was Bill Baston’s Stone-curlew *Burhinus oedicephalus* (fifth in BPY).

An interesting comparison of the voting decisions of panel and people. We hope that you enjoyed it.

For extended versions of many of the stories featured here, and much more, visit our website www.britishbirds.co.uk

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2013



giving
nature
a home

Nigel Hudson and the Rarities Committee

Chairman's introduction

This is the 56th annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee. Regular readers will immediately notice a small but significant addition to the data presented for each species. Following the familiar trio of statistics – showing the number of accepted records (i) prior to 1950, (ii) for the period from 1950 onwards but excluding those (iii) for the report year – a status summary describes relative rarity and any apparent trends in occurrence. Inspired by the authors of our sister report on Scarce Migrants, Nigel Hudson has developed a system which is more appropriate for vagrants. It is based on the statistics for the last 30 years (it will be updated for each report) and describes each taxon's frequency of occurrence (its status) then, for more regular vagrants, whether their occurrence in Britain is increasing, decreasing or stable (the trend). Any influxes or breeding records are also noted, while the term 'not yet determined' is used where we know our data are incomplete. Ultimately, we hope that this change will help readers derive even more from our report, highlighting more clearly the status of vagrants to Britain and how each species has fared in recent years. More details are given under item 5 in our 'principles and procedures' list on p. 582.

The new status summary makes it even easier to determine the highlights of 2013. Among these, a spring Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* was a welcome precursor to an exceptional summer of rarities, during which many younger observers gratefully accepted their first opportunity to connect with birds that had either been absent or at least not lingered in recent years. These included two male Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma*

monorhis on Fair Isle (one of them just about twitchable), a long-staying but wide-ranging Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* on the northeast coast, a tragically short-lived White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, and a Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* that eventually settled to feed over a coastal marsh in Suffolk for two days. The astonishing repeat occurrence of an Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* and an early autumn Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* were two headline events where the bird concerned managed to avoid the gaze of most observers, ensuring that these two species maintained their position *just* beyond the reach of British twitchers. September saw a record arrival of five Brown Shrikes *Lanius cristatus*, a tally which outstripped that of the closely related Isabelline Shrike *L. isabellinus* (of which there were four individuals, during October). Other autumn arrivals included the second-best showing of Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata*, the 11 in 2013 exceeded only by 13 in 1993; the joint-best year for Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (equalling the 16 recorded way back in 1981); and 11 Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, the best-ever haul for this species. The highlights of the winter for many observers came from the far north, first with an unprecedented arrival of Ivory Gulls *Pagophila eburnea*, and then with the appearance of not one but two live Brünnich's Guillemots *Uria lomvia* off the English coast, the second of these remaining for a few days in a south-coast harbour. For the latter species these are the first accepted records in England since 1977. The one disappointment was that the same weather conditions failed to bring a significant arrival of Ross's Gulls *Rhodostethia rosea*. Other highlights in 2013 featured a good showing

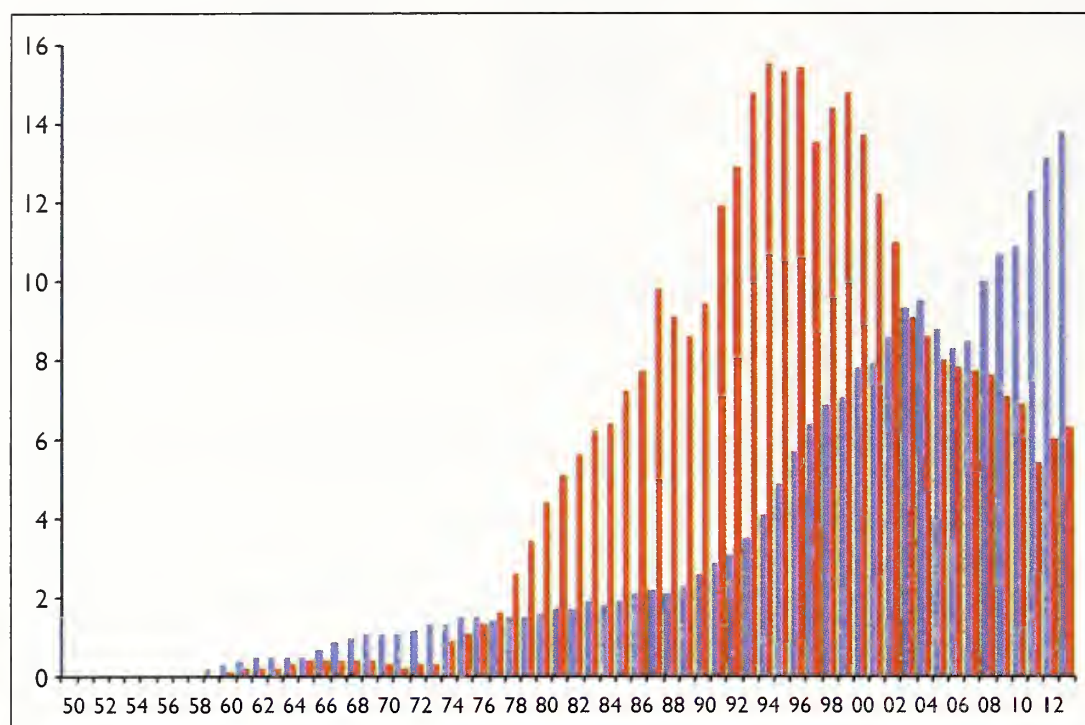


Fig. 1. The pattern of occurrence of Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (red) and Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (blue) in Britain, 1959–2013. In these graphs, the trend is the key thing to focus on. The data are derived from the ten-year running total, divided by ten (thus, for 1959, the figure is the cumulative total for 1950–59, divided by ten), which provides a smoothed graph of typical counts. The burning question for BBRC is whether Citrine Wagtail numbers will remain at their current high level or whether they might replicate the pattern shown by Siberian Stonechat.

of a suite of passerines from northeast Europe and beyond, with record totals of Collared Flycatchers *Ficedula albicollis* and Two-barred Crossbills *Loxia leucoptera* and the second-best showing of Blyth's Reed Warblers *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and Thrush Nightingales *Luscinia luscinia*.

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* had its joint best-ever year and this species continues to hover desperately close to relegation from the BBRC list. As alluded to in last year's introduction, we discussed the thresholds for removing species from the list at our AGM, in the wake of the recent Scarce Migrant reports in *BB*, which highlighted several species that are close to national rarity status according to our present criteria. We resolved that, although these criteria are valuable, we will begin to take a more considered judgement and ultimately a threshold of about ten records a year, *in combination with* an analysis of trends in occurrence and some insight into changes in distribution or population increases to guide our decisions in future. The real challenge is determining at what stage we relegate or readmit a species that may be going through a periodic increase or decline in its occurrence in

Britain. A good example is provided by comparing the records of Citrine Wagtail with those of Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (fig. 1). The stonechat was definitely a candidate for removal during a run of good years in the 1990s, but has subsequently returned to being a genuinely rare bird. The westward spread of the wagtail suggests that its current increase will be sustained, but we are keeping a watching brief for now to determine whether that will be the case.

It was a very poor year for Nearctic gulls, notwithstanding the fact that the total of Bonaparte's Gulls *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* was a new record high for a single year. Spring and summer saw the biggest arrival of Black Storks *Ciconia nigra* in recent years, the 18 in 2013 surpassed only by the 23 in 1991. The challenge of distinguishing wandering birds and new arrivals remains a tough one and, in reality, as in previous influxes, the true total of different individuals may have been somewhat lower. Ultimately we may well overestimate the number of individuals involved in such cases but, unless there is strong evidence to link occurrences, we tend to err on the side of caution. We always welcome offers from those interested in using the Committee's data to investigate such issues further.

The rarest birds featured in this report are as follows:

- 1st 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler'
Locustella naevia straminea/mongolica,
'Stejneger's Stonechat' *Saxicola maurus*
stejnegeri
- 1st & 2nd Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax*
alnorum
- 1st–4th 'Eastern Black Redstart'

Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus

- 2nd Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*, Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*, Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*
- 2nd & 3rd 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' *Sylvia cantillans moltonii*, 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *Motacilla flava simillima/plexa/tschutschensis/taivana/macronyx*
- 3rd Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*, Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*
- 4th Canada Goose *Branta canadensis interior/parvipes*, Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus*, Mourning Dove *Zenaidura macroura*
- 4th–6th 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*
- 5th Thick-billed Warbler *Iduna aedon*
- 5th & 6th Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*
- 6th Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*, Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*
- 6th & 7th Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*
- 7th Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*
- 8th Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*, White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*
- 9th Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*
- 10th 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *Lanius senator badius*, Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*

This year we have not published the statistics of records processed, which have been included in this introduction since 2007. The total number of records processed is typically over 700 per year, but it is heavily affected by the species involved. Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* contributed a significant number of records in 2009–11, while in 2013 there was a similar effect as a result of more than 100 records of Two-barred Crossbill. The percentage of accepted records hovers around 86–89%; this showed an increase during the period when digital photography became established (resulting in a parallel increase in the proportion of submissions accompanied by photographs), but has now levelled off. We shall continue to monitor our record processing and will report any significant changes.

BBRC made progress with some long-standing reviews in 2013, most notably with the Druridge Bay curlew, the results of which were published in *BB* earlier this year (Collinson *et al.* 2014). We have also made progress with the Royal Tern *Sterna maxima* and 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *Sylvia cantillans albistriata* reviews, although there is still some work to be done before we can publish our conclusions. The Subalpine Warbler complex poses a variety of issues and the Committee's position was set out by Andy Stoddart (Stoddart 2014). As Andy's paper emphasised, we encourage the submission of *all* records of Subalpine Warblers from 2015 onwards, a decision that will remain in place even if the proposed split is not adopted by BOURC. We have also been able to publish the second and third records of 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. moltonii* and 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *Motacilla flava simillima/plexa/tschutschensis/taivana/macronyx*, both of which are already on the British List on the basis of historical (i.e. pre-BBRC) records. These records do not require a categorisation review as BOURC considers categorisation only at the level of species, not of subspecies. We also completed the voting on a series of Cackling Goose *Branta hutchinsii* records, which have been passed to BOURC for consideration. BOURC is continuing to consider records of 'Thayer's Gull' *Larus (glaucoides) thayeri*, 'Daurian Shrike' *Lanius i. isabellinus* and Pale-legged Leaf Warbler *Phylloscopus tenellipes*.

Sadly, no progress has been made with the reviews of Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* and Great Snipe *Gallinago media* sightings. The same is true of the review of Elegant Tern *Sterna elegans* records: in this case, we await the results of molecular research since the confirmed occurrence of hybrids that very closely resemble Elegant Tern has posed challenges for accepting individuals observed in the field in western Europe. Readers might be forgiven for thinking that records of gulls that potentially originate from the northern Pacific (Glaucous-winged *Larus glaucescens* and Slaty-backed Gull *L. schistisagus*) have become stuck in the pack ice despite the warming climate... We are still trying to develop workable assessment criteria but we hope to resolve these and a number of other

outstanding records during the coming year.

The BBRC Twitter account (@_BBRC) has proved very popular and you can follow the latest decisions as they happen as well as keeping up to date with BBRC news on our website (www.bbrc.org.uk). We are grateful to all the observers who have submitted records via the online form on our website and we encourage all observers to submit their records in this format.

Acknowledgments

BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd. This, along with the support of RSPB, is invaluable in enabling BBRC to function and we remain extremely grateful to both sponsors. We wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their observations to BBRC, either directly or via County Recorders or the BirdGuides and/or Rare Bird Alert online galleries. Once again we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to county and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting BBRC. Thanks also go to all those individuals who updated information on earlier sightings, following the posting of work-in-

progress files on the BBRC website throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. BirdGuides and the staff at *Birdwatch* magazine have continued to assist the Committee, particularly by enabling the submission of photographs for consideration by BBRC. We thank the following in particular for their support in various ways during the year: Martin Collinson, Mark Constantine and the Sound Approach team, Steve Dudley, Dick Forsman, Peter Kennerley, John Martin, Chris McInerny, Keith Naylor, Richard Porter and Magnus Robb. Martin Collinson continued as our Genetic Consultant, John Marchant as Archivist, Reg Thorpe as Summariser and Brian Small as Museum Consultant. Andy Stoddart joined as Vice Chairman and has proved extremely helpful. We also thank the *Dutch Birding* team for providing electronic copies of papers from that journal for reference; Ian Lewington for our logo; the BTO for their continued generosity in providing space and facilities for our archive; and all the staff at the NHM, Tring, for their continued support for our work and allowing unlimited access to the specimens in the collection. Last but not least, James Lidster took on the responsibility of the BBRC Twitter account

Adam Rowlands

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155–158). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) dates; (5) if photographed, sound-recorded and/or DNA analysis carried out (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (6) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and ‘probables’ are not included. In cases of the very similar Eastern Bonelli’s *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli’s Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to frigatebirds *Fregata*, Zino’s/Fea’s Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta grallaria/tropica*, Western/Semipalmated Sandpipers *Calidris mauri/pusilla* and Booted/Sykes’s Warblers *Iduna caligata/rama* (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follows the ‘*British Birds*’ List of Birds of the Western Palearctic; see www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949 (these statistics are kindly supplied by Keith Naylor – note that they may vary slightly between reports, as his continuing research brings more accuracy to the numbers), (ii) for the period since 1950, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by ‘probably/presumed same’ (counted as the same in the totals); records for which it is less certain whether the birds involved were the same or not are counted as different in the totals. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species reappearing at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The status summary is based on the number of individuals which have occurred in the last 30 years, including the current year of the report.

So for example, in the 2013 Report, the data will be based on the years 1984 to 2013 inclusive. Returning birds are excluded. The Status is defined as: **Extremely Rare** – total number of birds 0, 1 or 2 in the last 30 years; **Very Rare** – total number of birds 3–9 in that period; or **Rare** – total number of birds 10–35 in that period. No status is given for taxa where the total number of records is more than 35 for the most recent 30-year period. There are currently some 290–300 taxa on the British List which are assessed by BBRC and the spread across these categories is approximately 100 extremely rare, 80 very rare, 55 rare and 60 others. Those species for which our data are incomplete, for example because many records are still being assessed (e.g. Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*) or historical records are still being sought (e.g. Black-bellied Dipper *Cinclus c. cinclus*), are termed **not yet determined**. Also noted are **influxes**, **returnees** (if these comprise a significant proportion of each year's records, e.g. Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis*) and instances of confirmed **breeding**. The **Trend** is based on a polynomial trend-line fitted to the ten-year moving average over the last 30 years (the ten-

year average for 1984 is the mean for 1975–84, that for 1985 is the mean for 1976–85 and so on up to the current report year). Trends are not given for Extremely Rare and Very Rare taxa, simply because there are insufficient data; a trend is shown for those Rare taxa that typically occur at a rate of around one a year, although the data are still sparse at this level and the trend shown is at best tentative. Even for more regular rarities, short-term peaks and troughs will affect the trend statement, and readers should bear this in mind, but in most cases it is a realistic interpretation of how each species is currently faring. However, if there has been a marked change in the trend during the 30-year period concerned (for example, species which have increased noticeably – such as Blyth's Reed Warbler), the term 'recent' may be used to denote the last 15 years.

6. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.
7. The following abbreviations have been used in the main text of the report: BO = Bird Observatory, CP = Country Park, GP = Gravel-pit, Resr = Reservoir, SF = Sewage-farm.

Canada Goose *Branta canadensis*

North American races, *B. c. interior/parvipes* (0, 4, 0) Not yet determined

Argyll Rhunahaorine, Kintyre, adult, 21st November 2012 to 20th March, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 574.

2006 Argyll Loch Gruinart RSPB, Islay, 10th–11th December, photo (J. P. Martin, M. McGill).

(Canada & N USA, introduced W Europe. Race *interior* breeds NE Canada from Hudson Bay E to Baffin Island, & NW Greenland. Winters SE USA. Race *parvipes* breeds W Alaska, E to Yukon Territory. Most winter Washington & Oregon, some also NE Texas.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (7, 76, 0) About two per year + returnees; stable

Argyll Kilchoman, Loch Gorm and Loch Gruinart, Islay, adult, 21st October 2012 to 19th April, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 575–576.

Dumfries & Galloway Loaningfoot and Southernness Point, adult, 26th December 2012 to 30th January, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 575–576); presumed same 15th December into 2014, photo (G. Chambers *et al.*).

Hampshire Farlington Marshes, adult, 25th October 2012 to 5th April, photo (see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 575–576); presumed same Langstone Harbour, Fareham Creek, Chichester Harbour and Keyhaven, 27th September into 2014, photo (per Hampshire Recorder); also seen Isle of Wight, Kent, Sussex.

Isle of Wight Shalfleet and Newtown, adult, 17th–20th December, photo (I. Outlaw *et al.* per Isle of Wight Recorder); also seen Hampshire, Kent, Sussex.

Kent Oare Marshes, adult, 6th April (M. Wright); also seen Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Sussex.

Sussex Selsey Bill, adult, 13th January (J. Atkinson *et al.*), presumed same Thorney Island and Thorney Deepes, 14th January to 3rd March, photo (C. B. & M. A. Collins *et al.*) and Chichester Harbour, 3rd October, photo (A. Johnson per Sussex Recorder); also seen Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent.

1997 Essex Brightlingsea, 16th February (S. Cox), presumed same as Essex 1996, below.

1996 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 11th March (per Essex Recorder), presumed same as Essex 1996 (*Brit. Birds* 91: 464).

1993 Essex Brightlingsea and East Mersea, 24th January (D. Urquhart), presumed same as Essex 1993 (*Brit. Birds* 87: 513–514).

1987 Essex Althorne, Canewdon and Creeksea area, adult, 27th December 1986 to 15th March, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 80: 526).

1986 Essex Bradwell, adult, 12th February (per Essex Recorder); presumed same Fingringhoe Wick, 16th February (G. C. Bond), presumed same as East Mersea, Essex 1986 (*Brit. Birds* 80: 526).

1984 Essex The Naze, adult, 22nd February (G. R. Ekins), presumed same as Essex 1984 (*Brit. Birds* 78: 536).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* (1, 3, 2) Very rare, all modern records since 2001

Lancashire & North Merseyside Crossens Outer Marsh, Southport, male, 30th November to 11th December, photo (C. Bell *et al.*) (plate 278).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, male, 15th April, photo (B. Richards *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 223).

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, N to 70°N, although breeding range believed to have contracted in recent years. Most winter South Korea & lower Yangtze River, China, with small numbers regular E & S Japan.)



Steve Young/Birdwatch

278. Male Baikal Teal *Anas formosa*, with Eurasian Wigeons *A. penelope* and Eurasian Teals *A. crecca*, Southport, Lancashire & North Merseyside, December 2013.

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 39, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable

Highland Strontian, Loch Sunart, adult male, 23rd December 2012 to 2nd February, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 576.

Shetland Loch of Hillwell then Boddam, Mainland, male, 11th–18th June, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*).

A fairly typical year, with one new bird and one long-stayer. The Loch Sunart bird has been around since 2011 and may be the same male seen there in June 2007. In 2012 it was paired with a female Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* and a presumed hybrid was also observed. Hybridisation is frequently recorded in the USA and has been noted here before. Those with long memories will remember the annual trip to Tresco and the thrill of separating the female Black Duck, first

recorded in 1976, from its many hybrid offspring from 1978 onwards. Similarly, the long-staying male at Aber, Caernarfonshire, paired with a female Mallard and produced many young over the years. The comments in our 2008 report, worth repeating here, were: 'If a suspect [Black Duck] is found, due care and attention should be paid to the bill, tail pattern and speculum to ensure that a hybrid can be ruled out'.

Black Duck remains a rare visitor to Britain, the male in Shetland being the 40th record in the 46 years since the first, in Kent in March 1967. This year's bird was the seventh to be recorded in Shetland. Unsurprisingly, Shetland, Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly account for half of all records.

(Breeds E North America from Manitoba to Labrador, Canada, & S to North Carolina, USA. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter coastal SE USA.)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (10, 245, 10) About six per year; stable or decreasing

Angus & Dundee Barry Buddon, Monifieth, male, 16th May, photo (A. Sangster).

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes RSPB, adult male, 3rd–26th August (A. Cooper *et al.*), presumed same Ouse Fen RSPB, 8th–9th September, photo (R. D. Thomas *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, male, 19th–20th April, photo (C. E. Wells *et al.*); also seen Flintshire.

Clyde Bridgend Farm, Kirkintilloch, adult male, 5th May to 5th June, photo (C. J. McNerny *et al.*), presumed same Frankfield Loch, Stepps, 7th September to 18th October, photo (C. J. McNerny *et al.*); presumed same as Clyde 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 576.

Dumfries & Galloway Threave, adult male, 29th November 2012 to 29th March; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 576.

Flintshire Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, male, 19th–20th April, photo (K. J. Smith *et al.*); also seen Cheshire & Wirral.

Herefordshire Wellington GP, adult male, 10th November, photo (J. Tilby *et al.*).

Isle of Man Point of Ayre GP, male, 25th May (E. J. Abraham).

Lincolnshire Boutham Mere, three (two males and a juvenile female), 13th September to 12th November, photo (D. G. Nicholson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 411; 107: plate 279).

Orkney Ancum and Hooking Loch, North Ronaldsay, 17th August (S. J. Davies *et al.*). Bridesness, North Ronaldsay, juvenile/female, 5th–15th December, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

1994 Staffordshire Blithfield Resr, adult male, 1st May (P. Jones *et al.*).

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to SC USA. Migratory, wintering S USA, Mexico, Caribbean & N South America.)



279. Blue-winged Teals *Anas discors*, Boutham Mere, Lincolnshire, September 2013.

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 166, 15) *About six per year + returnees; increasing*

Avon Blagdon Lake, adult male, 7th December 2012 to 31st January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 576–577), presumed same Chew Valley Lake, 4th–20th November, photo (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*) and Blagdon Lake, 9th November (P. Delve, N. R. Milbourne); also seen East Glamorgan.

Caithness St John's Loch, adult male, 10th May to 11th June, photo (J. Smith per Caithness Recorder).

Cheshire & Wirral Burton Mere Wetlands RSPB, first-winter male, 3rd March, photo (C. E. Wells *et al.*); also seen Derbyshire, Flintshire, Lincolnshire.

Cleveland Saltholme RSPB then Haverton Hole, male, 3rd April to 20th May, photo (M. A. Blick *et al.*).

Clyde Auchendores and Leperstone Resrs, male, 12th March to 28th April, photo (R. van der Starre *et al.*).

Cornwall Dozmary Pool, adult male, 7th–11th January (per birding information services), presumed same Colliford Lake, 13th–30th January (D. Parker *et al.*) and Dozmary Pool, 29th December into 2014 (D. Parker *et al.*); presumed same as Cornwall 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 576–577.

Derbyshire Ogston Resr, first-winter male, 16th March, photo (S. Mann *et al.*); also seen Cheshire & Wirral, Flintshire, Lincolnshire.

Dumfries & Galloway Souleseat Loch, male, 29th April (P. Berry).

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay and Cosmeston Lakes, adult male, 3rd February to 20th April (A. Bevan, G. Pryce, J. Wilson *et al.* per East Glamorgan Recorder), presumed same Cardiff Bay, 30th September to 29th October (G. Stamp *et al.* per East Glamorgan Recorder) and 23rd November into 2014 (G. Stamp *et al.* per East Glamorgan Recorder); also seen Avon.

Flintshire Shotwick Fields, first-winter male, 31st January to 4th February, photo (S. Skelton *et al.*), presumed same 4th–8th March, photo (per birding information services); also seen Cheshire & Wirral, Derbyshire, Lincolnshire.

Greater Manchester Pennington Flash CP, adult male, 1st September to 17th October, photo (I. McKerchar, J. Tymon *et al.*).

Gwent Bryn Bach CP, male, 27th March to 27th April, photo (T. Chinnick *et al.*).

Herefordshire Wellington GP and Hereford Quarry, male, 16th March to 28th April (P. Downes).

Highland Alturlie, adult female, 12th December into 2014, photo (A. M. Ritchie *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Brockholes Wetland, adult male, 15th March, photo (W. C. Aspin *et al.*). Borwick Waters, female, 14th April to 6th May, photo (P. J. Marsh *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Freiston Shore RSPB, first-winter male, 19th March to 14th April, photo (per birding information services); also seen Cheshire & Wirral, Derbyshire, Flintshire.

Nottinghamshire Netherfield Lagoons, adult male, 20th–21st April, photo (R. Woodward *et al.*), presumed same Holme Pierrepont, 22nd–27th April, photo (A. M. Clewes *et al.*). Lound GP, Idle Valley, male, 4th June, photo (I. Cowgill *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch an Daill, Aird Mhor, South Uist, adult female, 23rd November into 2014, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

Yorkshire Pugneys CP, adult male, 30th April, photo (J. D. Holliday, P. Smith *et al.*), presumed same Anglers CP, Wintersett, 2nd–21st May, photo (S. Denny *et al.*).

2012 North-east Scotland Loch of Skene, Westhill, female, 6th–15th January (H. A. Addlesee, P. A. A. Baxter *et al.*).

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters along both coastlines of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, West Indies, C America to N Colombia.)

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (68, 175, 5) *About 4–5 per year + returnees; stable or increasing*

Lothian Eyebroughy to Gullane Point, first-winter female, 11th December into 2014, photo (M. Griffin *et al.*). Fidra, female, 15th December into 2014, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*).

Moray & Nairn Burghead, adult male, 18th September to 17th November, photo (R. Proctor, R. Wilson *et al.*), presumed same Nairn, 8th December into 2014, photo (D. MacAskill *et al.*); presumed same as Moray & Nairn 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 577–578.

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary and Blackdog, adult male, 12th April to 12th July, photo (N. Littlewood, H. Maggs *et al.*), presumed same as Blackdog and Murcar, North-east Scotland 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 577–578.

Outer Hebrides Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, first-winter female, 11th November, photo (J. B. Kemp).

Shetland Symbister, Whalsay, second-winter male, 31st December 2012 to 8th May, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 577–578. Linga and Hascosay Sound, Yell, first-winter male, 1st–29th March, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*), presumed same Hascosay Sound, 10th November into 2014, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Tresta Voe, Mainland, first-summer male, 16th–17th June (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

The change in post-1950 statistics compared with last year's report is due to nine records in the period 1962–71 being omitted from our database in error.

(Breeds Kanin Peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya & W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada & N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway & Iceland. Pacific population winters Bering Sea.)

Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus* (6, 11, 1) Very rare, last in 2007

Outer Hebrides Balranald, North Uist, first-winter male, 18th February to 1st June, photo (B. Rabbitts *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 147; 107: plate 280).

Balranald's first-winter male fits neatly into the established pattern of occurrence for this species, which, with only 12 'modern' records, remains a major rarity. All the British records since 1950 have been in Scotland, and the Outer Hebrides now draws level with Fair Isle in that period, each area with three individuals (although there is also a record for the Outer Hebrides from the 1930s; interestingly, the other five older records were all in northern England). The statistics show that the best month to find a Harlequin is January, with five records since 1950, while there are two arrivals each in February, April and October. The St Kilda bird in June 2007 is an outlier in terms of timing, but perhaps even more surprisingly none have been discovered in March, November or December.



Steve Duffield

280. First-winter male Harlequin Duck *Histrionicus histrionicus*, Balranald, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, March 2013.

It is unclear where British Harlequins originate from, since the nearest population (in Iceland) is largely sedentary. While some of the birds breeding in northeast Canada are long-distance migrants, more than half of that population moves a relatively short distance to winter along the coasts of northeast Canada and the USA; what's more, if this is the main source of our birds, why do they turn up only in Scotland? The reason surely cannot be habitat-related, since there is an abundance of rocky shorelines along the entire western seaboard of Britain. The idea that some of the Scottish birds might originate in Siberia is another possibility.

(Atlantic population breeds Iceland, S Greenland, & E Canada from S Ellesmere Island to Labrador & Gulf of St Lawrence. Pacific population breeds NE Russia from Lake Baikal E to Kamchatka & S Sakhalin, Alaska & W Canada S to Oregon, USA. Resident Iceland. Other populations disperse to coasts S of breeding range.)

Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica* (0, 5, 1) Very rare + returnees, all since 2007

Cornwall Marazion and Mount's Bay, adult, 5th December 2012 to 25th March, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 581), presumed same Dodman Point and Pendower Beach, 10th–27th November, photo (S. C. Votier *et al.*); presumed same as Cornwall 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 581.

Shetland Grutness Voe, Mainland, adult, 16th May, photo (A. L. B. Flaws, P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 253; 107: plates 246, 281).

It is remarkable that, since the first in 2007, there have now been six British records of this species. Yet, after an initial flurry of records (there were three in total in 2007, two more in 2009, and several of these have returned in one or more subsequent winters), the Shetland bird is the first new arrival since 2009. This individual is also notable because not only is it the first record for Scotland, but is also the first in breeding plumage – all in all, a top-drawer find from high-class observers. Field identification has come a long way since the first records, but this is still a difficult species to confirm. While the field characteristics are well described, several are subtle and perhaps one of the most critical features, the dark rear flank, can be difficult to confirm beyond doubt. Consequently, photographs of the Shetland bird were crucial in supporting the identification of this bird during its very short stay – see *Brit. Birds* 107: 476–480.

The adult Pacific Diver in Cornwall during November 2013 is presumed to be the same bird



Roger Riddington

281. Adult Pacific Diver *Gavia pacifica*, Grutness, Mainland, Shetland, May 2013.

that was first seen in Mount's Bay in February 2007 (about 50 km to the west). However, it is worth considering that this stretch of coastline – from Falmouth Bay to St Austell Bay – is the most important wintering site in the UK for Black-throated Diver *G. arctica* – the mean peak count during winters 2009/10 and 2010/11 of 115 individuals represents >20% of the British wintering population (Musgrove *et al.* 2013). There is a possibility that other Pacific Divers go unnoticed among their more numerous cousins in this diver hotspot, and that more than one Pacific Diver may have wintered in Cornwall.

(Breeds NE Siberia from lower Indigirka river E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, & N North America from Alaska E to Hudson Bay & S Baffin Island. Winters North Pacific Ocean, in Asia S to Japan & E China, & North America S to Baja California & Sonora, Mexico.)

Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeirae* (0, 47, 6) About two per year; stable or increasing

Caernarfonshire Bardsey Island, 15th September (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Caithness Duncansby Head, 7th September (C. Griffin); also seen Highland, Northumberland.

Cornwall Gwennap Head, Porthgwarra, 4th August (J. Holliday, B. K. Mellow *et al.*). Gwennap Head, 14th August (J. Atkinson, P. S. Woollen).

Highland Helmsdale, 7th September (D. Roche); also seen Caithness, Northumberland.

Isles of Scilly At sea, 6 km S of Scilly, 9th August, photo (J. Pender *et al.*). At sea, 13 km E of Scilly, 23rd October (P. R. French, A. Jayne *et al.*).

Northumberland Inner Sound, Farne Islands, 6th September (D. Steel); also seen Caithness, Highland.

The 2013 records in Cornwall and Scilly went some way to closing the gap in numbers between the southwest and the northeast regions. Counterintuitive it may be but, until this year, the best section of British coastline from which to find a *Pterodroma* lay between Spurn and the Farne Islands, with no fewer than 21 records (including this year's bird from Northumberland; see *Brit. Birds* 103: 573). There are now 18 records from the southwest, although the three photographed birds from sea area Sole, which were specifically identified as Fea's Petrels, bring the southwest up to a grand total of 21 also. Perhaps surprisingly, the coastline between Hampshire and Lincolnshire accounts for only four birds, which hints at a northern route being the likely entry and exit point from the North Sea for most of the birds seen off the northeast coast. Data from geolocator studies show that small numbers of Fea's Petrels from the Desertas Islands of Madeira forage in the Gulf Stream during both the breeding and the non-breeding season, with birds present off the eastern USA at both times (but peak numbers there are from mid May to mid September). Perhaps these birds are the source of many British sightings as they track the Gulf Stream across the Atlantic, with some even following deep water into the Faroe–Shetland Channel before spilling down into the North Sea. Further support for this comes from the lack of records on the near continent: there is just one record from the Netherlands, none from Belgium and two from the English Channel coast of France.

Observers lucky enough to be faced with a putative *Pterodroma* should also be aware of the possibility of something even rarer than a Fea's. An apparent Bermuda Petrel *P. cahow* was photographed off Co. Kerry in May 2014 (that record is still under consideration by IBRC) while an unidentified pale-winged *Pterodroma* was photographed off Denmark in 2011. Geolocator studies have also shown that Zino's Petrels occur in the northeast North Atlantic, perhaps within striking distance of the western coasts of Britain (Zino *et al.* 2011). Notwithstanding the margin for error on these devices, it is perhaps only a matter of time before Zino's Petrel is confirmed in British waters. Detailed descriptions of the underwing and upperparts remain crucial for acceptance to Zino's/Fea's level; despite recent advances in the field identification of this species pair, good-quality photographs showing the bill structure and preferably the underwing and body structure will remain necessary to differentiate the two. Fea's Petrel comprises two forms, the nominate race which breeds on the Cape Verde Islands and *P. f. desertae* from the Desertas. There is currently no way of separating them at sea, although *P. f. desertae* has, on average, a heavier bill.

(Breeding Zino's confined to C mountains of Madeira. Fea's breeds on Bugio, Desertas, & Cape Verde Islands.)

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (3, 61, 1) Not yet determined

Devon Start Point, 4th August (M. Darlaston).

2012 Devon Berry Head, 7th June (M. Langman).

(North Atlantic range restricted to warmer waters of Madeira, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands & the Azores. Outside the breeding season found at sea near breeding sites within North Atlantic.)

Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* (0, 5, 2) Very rare, last in 2000, 2005

Fair Isle South Haven, adult male, 27th July, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (R. D. Cope, D. McGibbon, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 18). South Haven, adult male, 7th August to 3rd September, trapped, photo, sound recording, DNA analysis (K. Lawrence, W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 323; 107: plate 282).

There are very few other species on the British List about which we know so little in a Western Palearctic context. The majority of the world population of Swinhoe's Storm-petrels is thought to breed on Gugeul Island, South Korea, with other colonies scattered around the Japanese and Yellow Seas, with perhaps small colonies remaining on islands off Taiwan. The species is thought to be in decline owing to introduced ground predators, disturbance from tourism and invasive alien plants; the population is currently listed as at least 130,000 pairs (www.birdlife.org). The majority of the population winters in the northern Indian Ocean, so on the face of it this is a highly unlikely vagrant to the North Atlantic. However, in attempting to explain the handful of Atlantic records, Flood & Fisher (2011) suggested that a population became established in the North Atlantic after suitable climatic conditions (perhaps around the time of the 'Little Ice Age' in the 1700s) led to small numbers rounding the Cape of Good Hope and becoming 'marooned' in the Atlantic. Perhaps a small breeding population has survived since, most likely somewhere in

Macaronesia (where birds with a brood patch have been trapped on the Selvagens and off Lanzarote). Conceivably, it could be even farther north, since the most famous of the three 'Tyne petrels' (a female trapped at Tynemouth in consecutive summers between 1990 and 1994) also exhibited a brood patch (see Cubitt 1995), while now we have the extraordinary appearance of two males trapped in the same summer on Fair Isle. The presence of a brood patch does not necessarily mean that the individual is incubating or brooding, however, and even though one of the Fair Isle males has returned in 2014 there is no evidence that the bird is breeding there (see also pp. 654–655). It should also be noted that on Fair Isle a Swinhoe's was heard calling during a routine storm-petrel trapping session in the early hours of 22nd July 2013; it was not trapped and is perhaps best assumed to be the same as the one caught five days later on 27th – but of course we cannot be sure.

Most readers will no doubt be aware of the notorious 'Chalice petrel' from the summer of 1988. Seen from a pelagic trip on the



Will Miles

282. Adult male Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*, Fair Isle, August 2013.

MV *Chalice* in sea area Sole on 3rd August 1988, that petrel spent several minutes giving good views and photographic opportunities in the company of several European Storm-petrels *Hydrobates pelagicus*. Its identification has proved controversial ever since. Although it was initially called as a Bulwer's Petrel *Bulweria bulwerii*, the observers on board quickly realised that it was actually one of the dark-rumped storm-petrels from the Pacific. It was then identified as a Tristram's Storm-petrel *O. tristrami* before the photographs were seen, after which it was reidentified and submitted to BBRC as a Matsudaira's Storm-petrel *O. matsudairae* (a decision that may have been influenced in small part by the mistaken belief that a Matsudaira's had been trapped on the Selvagens earlier that summer – that bird later proved to have been a Swinhoe's). Innumerable column inches have been written on the identification of the *Chalice* petrel (see for example Gantlett 1988, Force 1997, Hume *et al.* 1997, Young & King 1997, Morrison 1998), but the paper by Garner & Mullaney (2004) finally saw the weight of evidence swing firmly into the Swinhoe's camp.

It was resubmitted as a Swinhoe's Storm-petrel in 2009, by one of the original observers, and has been in circulation with either BBRC or BOURC ever since. It was accepted as a Swinhoe's by BBRC in a single circulation and was then passed on to BOURC as potentially the first record for Britain. BOURC took the decision that the identification was not 100% certain, and so did not accept it. It is not often that BBRC and BOURC disagree on matters of identification, and some readers may even be unaware that BOURC also looks independently at the identification of British firsts rather than just provenance. This record therefore enters the twilight world of sightings which are accepted by BBRC but do not feature in our statistics as they are not considered acceptable by BOURC as the first record for Britain.

Observers faced with a putative Swinhoe's Storm-petrel at sea should try to get an accurate assessment of size in comparison with other storm-petrels, exact plumage details of the covert bar and rump pattern (looking for any traces of possible pale areas or moult that may indicate a Leach's Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa*) and, perhaps most importantly, the exact flight style and jizz.

(Breeds on offshore islands in NE Pacific from Peter the Great Bay nr Vladivostok, Russia, S to N Honshu, Japan, the Korean Peninsula & islands off E China. Migrates through E & S China Seas & Straits of Singapore to winter in tropical Indian Ocean.)

Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus* (0, 3, 1) Very rare, all since 2001

Cornwall Pendeen Watch, 18th August, photo (T. Whiley) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 248, 283).

Reports of passing seabirds observed from coastal headlands more often than not present the Committee with perhaps the most difficult and challenging type of record assessment. They are generally seen at great distance, usually during inclement weather and, more often than not, seen by only one or two individuals. The period of observation is typically short and the bird is rarely within photographic range. There were no such problems with this record, however. Witnessed by just a single observer, this bird not only passed close inshore (indeed too close to be seen by the many other observers watching from a higher vantage point) but made fairly leisurely progress, allowing a series of photographs to be taken (see *Brit. Birds* 107: 476–480).

The three previous records, all from the southwest (sea area Sole, 32 km SSE of Scilly, 7th June 2001; sea area Sole, 6.5 km E of Scilly, 29th March 2002; and 1.5 km off The Lizard, Cornwall, 21st April 2002) may in fact have involved just one individual, although they are currently treated as separate birds, while a sighting from Guernsey on 16th September 2001 also fits into this cluster. Seabirds have a track record of repeat performances, although a gap of 11 years with no reports surely means that the 2013 bird is different. An



Tom Whiley

283. Red-billed Tropicbird *Phaethon aethereus*, Pendeen, Cornwall, August 2013.

Irish record, from Co. Cork on 15th September 2009, coupled with occasional sightings from the Canary Islands suggests that the wait for the next one may not be too long.

(Rare breeder Cape Verde Islands, has bred Azores & suspected Canary Islands. Elsewhere breeds Caribbean & Red Seas, Indian & E Pacific Oceans. Resident or dispersive in non-breeding season but distribution at sea poorly known.)

Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila* (0, 1, 1) Extremely rare, one other record in 1953

Argyll Bowmore, Islay, juvenile, 5th July, photo (V. V. S. Bonarjee, J. Brown, T. E. Matre, T. Redman, J. Sim) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 251, 284).

The fact that one Ascension Frigatebird should make it to Europe seemed amazing (Walbridge *et al.* 2003); that two should make it seems almost incredible. Add on the chances that both of these birds would be on islands in Argyll, and that their arrival dates would be just days apart (albeit with 60 years in between), and it makes this record from 2013 one of the most fascinating of the year. As the name suggests, the species breeds only on Ascension Island, where the population stands at some 25,000–32,000 individuals (www.birdlife.org).

This bird was seen initially by V. V. S. Bonarjee and T. E. Matre, who were looking out of their hotel window during breakfast, and (independently) by Jim Sim at about the same time. All three observers managed to obtain photographs before the frigatebird was chased off by gulls. The importance of these photographs was further confirmed when the Committee voted Jim Sim's images as a clear winner of the 2014 Carl Zeiss Award (*Brit. Birds* 107: 476–480). Instructive, and indeed instrumental in the record being accepted, they certainly were. What are the chances of a non-photographed Ascension Frigatebird, seen only by non-birders, being accepted? Indeed, had there been no photos would it have even have made the grade as a frigatebird?

Once the news broke some 50 twitchers headed to Argyll in the hope of relocating the bird, sadly to no avail. In years gone by most birders would have assumed that any frigatebird species encountered in Britain would have been a Magnificent *F. magnificens*, based solely on the fact that that species is globally more numerous, with a substantial population breeding in the

Caribbean and a handful of pairs breeding in the Western Palearctic. Now, with two Magnificents (one of those from the Isle of Man) and two Ascensions (as well as three 'frigatebird sp.'), it will be interesting to see which will be the next to occur – and will it linger and survive long enough to be enjoyed en masse?

(Breeds exclusively on Boatswainbird Islet, off NE coast of Ascension Island in tropical Atlantic. Outside breeding season believed to remain nr Ascension Island.)



Tor Egil Matre

284. Juvenile Ascension Frigatebird *Fregata aquila*, Bowmore, Islay, July 2013.

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (247, 243, 5) About 3–4 per year, breeding; stable

Somerset Westhay Moor, male in song, 24th April to 2nd June (per Somerset Recorder). Ham Wall RSPB, male in song, 27th April to 9th August, and female, 21st May to 10th August (per Somerset Recorder); both photographed and presumed same as Somerset 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 581–582. One juvenile seen 19th July to 3rd August, with a second juvenile on the last date (per Somerset Recorder). Ham Wall RSPB, two other males, both in song, 25th June to 19th July (per Somerset Recorder).

Little Bitterns bred once again in Somerset in 2013 but, as in previous years, it was difficult to establish exactly how many birds were involved, how many formed breeding pairs and how many young fledged successfully; the Rare Breeding Birds Panel report for 2013 may present a fuller picture. We have assumed that the pair present from April–May at Ham Wall was the same as the pair first seen in 2010, and that they produced the two juveniles seen this year. Unpaired males (at least two, perhaps three) were also heard in the same area, along with what was presumed to be a different male at a nearby site. There were further reports at other sites in the area, including possible breeding, but none of these was confirmed.

(Widespread but local in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in European Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. Migratory, wintering mainly E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa & Australia.)

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (69, 85, 2) About two per year; increasing

Cornwall Lethytp, Lanreath, adult, 8th May, photo (P. Hambly), presumed same Halton Quay, Saltash, 16th–17th May, photo (D. & M. Scofield).

Isle of Wight Brading Marshes RSPB, adult, 8th–14th June, photo (K. A. Ballard, D. Hunnybun, C. Meaney, I. Ridett).

2011 Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, 16th October, photo (C. Griffin).

(Breeds Mediterranean basin from S Spain to Black Sea & E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube Delta. Northern populations migratory, wintering N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (22, 193, 18) About six per year; stable

Argyll Fanmore, Mull, 26th May (G. Daly, P. Toner), presumed same Dervaig, Mull, 26th May, photo (T. & D. Parsons); also seen Highland.

Denbighshire Merddyn, Gwytherin, adult, 6th–9th May (P. & R. Leonard per Denbighshire Recorder).

Derbyshire Ilkeston, 29th July (A. & F. Phillips).

Devon North Molton, adult, 6th May (D. Barford, R. G. Marshall).

Dorset Weymouth then Dorchester, two adults, 20th April, photo (J. & M. Down, P. Harris).

Gloucestershire Woorgreens and Staple Edge Wood, Forest of Dean, adult, 25th June, photo (A. Jayne, L. Thomson).

Hampshire Acres Down, New Forest, adult, 18th May (S. Harris, R. Souter *et al.*), presumed same Oxenbourne Down, Petersfield, 19th May (T. G. Ball *et al.*) and Hockley Viaduct, River Itchen, 19th May (D. Hoare).

Highland Gruinard Bay, adult, 26th May (M. Selby, M. Whitehead); also seen Argyll.

Kent Cottington, adult, 9th August, photo (P. Wells).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, adult, 22nd August, photo (E. Ansell, T. Carter, J. Wright *et al.*).

Northumberland Corby's Crag, Edlingham, 1st May, photo (J. Latham, J. & P. Tapsell).

Suffolk Westleton Heath, two adults, 1st May (K. D. Offord).

Sussex Horsted Keynes, adult, 25th May (M. Mallalieu).

Wiltshire Hamptworth, adult, 1st July (P. Combridge). Stoke Farthing, Broad Chalke, two adults, 8th August, photo (N. & N. Tinkler).

Yorkshire Troutsdale, 14th June (R. I. Stark).

1983 Essex Little Hallingbury, 12th June, note revised date (*Brit. Birds* 82: 513).

(Breeds C Iberia & E France through C Europe to Russia & small numbers into N Greece & Turkey. To E, breeds widely in forested temperate regions of Russia & Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering Africa, S & SE Asia.)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 40, 2) Rare, about one per year; stable

Outer Hebrides Loch nam Feithean, North Uist, 6th December into 2014, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, male in song, 15th February to 5th May, photo (S. Miller *et al.* per Somerset Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 148; 107: plate 285).

(Breeds throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, the Caribbean & much of South America. Northern populations migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico.)



Gary Thoburn

285. Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps*, Ham Wall RSPB, Somerset, March 2013.

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

North American race, 'Northern Harrier' *C. c. hudsonius* (0, 4, 2) Very rare, all but one since 2008

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes RSPB, juvenile female, 19th October to 12th November, photo (J. A. Hanlon, D. Hopkins *et al.*) (plates 286, 335 & 336).

Cornwall Men-an-Tol, adult male, 23rd November, photo (R. Sharples).

2008 Orkney North Ronaldsay, 24th September to 3rd October, photo (A. C. Lees *et al.*).

The gap between the appearance of Britain's first 'Marsh Hawk', on the Isles of Scilly in 1982/83, and its acceptance 25 years later did not prepare the birding community for what was to follow. Northern Harriers have burst onto the scene on this side of the Atlantic in a most unexpected way, and have become more or less annual in the last five or six years in Britain & Ireland. Credit is due to Alex Lees for his searching questions about harrier identification; the juvenile seen in Orkney in 2008 by himself and others now becomes the second British record.

In 2013 there was the second record of a grey male in Britain, yet like the first (in Co. Durham on 22nd February 2009) it was identified retrospectively from photographs. While there is a perception that grey males with browner upperparts are second-calendar-year birds, the reality is that grey males are highly variable and 2CYs can be aged with certainty only by the presence of retained juvenile plumage.

Records of Northern Harrier will surely continue to attract much interest and in most cases photographs will be vital to proving the identification. So far, the wide scatter of British records should alert observers to the potential occurrence of this Nearctic vagrant virtually anywhere that



James Hanlon

286. Juvenile 'Northern Harrier' *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*, Ouse Washes RSPB, Cambridgeshire, October 2013.

harriers might occur. Critical features to note on autumn juveniles include: the head pattern; the precise colour and extent of streaking in the underbody; how dark the upperparts are; and the barring on the underside of the outer primaries, which is especially important. For older (grey) males, the pattern of black and white in the outer primaries and presence of tail-barring are critical. Now that it has become firmly established that Northern Harriers are capable of crossing the Atlantic, expectations of finding the American form of Osprey *Pandion haliaetus carolinensis* (of which there are records in Iceland and the Azores) or even the first Western Palearctic Sharp-shinned Hawk *Accipiter striatus* are not unwarranted.

(Race *hudsonius* breeds Alaska E to Canadian Maritime Provinces, S throughout Canada & USA from California E to Pennsylvania & Maryland, & S to Baja California, Mexico. Northern populations migratory, wintering from USA S throughout C America to N Colombia.)

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (2, 58, 5) About 2–3 per year, influx 2011 (29); recent increase

Highland Between Blairmore and Sandwood Bay, juvenile, 25th August, photo (D. Pressland).

Norfolk Horsey, juvenile, 8th May, photo (P. F. Fairman).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, juvenile, 20th April to 1st May, photo (D. Boyle, L. Yates *et al.*).

Surrey Newark Lane, Ripley, male, 31st March, photo (M. L. & V. J. Hill).

Wiltshire Larkhill Artillery Range, Salisbury Plain, adult male, 31st August to 8th September (L. H. Cady, P. E. Castle).

(Breeds from Ukraine E through Russia to c. 100°E, & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds Finland. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E & C Africa, & Indian subcontinent.)

Sora *Porzana carolina* (5, 11, 2) Very rare, last in 2006

Isles of Scilly Great Pool, Tresco, first-winter male, 9th–29th October, photo (C. Lewis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 468). Lower Moors, St Mary's, 19th October, photo (D. Grundy).

Two records in the same recording area at the same time is unprecedented. With seven of the 18 records, Scilly accounts for almost half of all British records. Eleven other recording areas, scattered the length and breadth of Britain, each have a single record. The Lower Moors bird had an unusual amount of dark/blackish colouring on the breast. Whether this represents a plumage abnormality or staining from some pollutant is unclear, but if it was oil it may suggest a period of time aboard a ship on its way to Shooters Pool.

(Breeds North America from C Canada S to C California & Maryland, USA. Migrates to winter from S USA to C America & N South America.)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (134, 301, 7) About eight per year, influxes 1987 (33), 2012 (30), occasional breeding; stable

Cambridgeshire Wicken Fen, male, 14th–19th May, photo (J. A. Hanlon *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle Estuary RSPB, adult female, 27th September to 10th October, photo (M. Scott-Ham *et al.*).

Gwent Newport Wetlands RSPB, two, female & adult male, 26th April, photo (R. Ruston *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh RSPB: adult male, 7th May, photo (R. Borwick *et al.*); two adults, 3rd June, photo (N. Smith *et al.* per Lincolnshire Recorder).

2012 Norfolk Cley Marshes and Kelling, female, 6th–10th June, then Welney WWT, 13th–18th June; note additional locations and revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 106: 589–590).

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter sub-Saharan Africa &, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter S & SE Asia & S China.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (2, 77, 4) About 2–3 per year; stable

Cambridgeshire Burwell Fen, adult, 24th July, photo (R. Johnson, A. Long).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, adult, 15th–18th July, photo (M. G. Berriman, J. M. Hague *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon Water, adult, 19th October, photo (P. R. Allard, K. R. Dye).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 1st July, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, including New Siberian islands, & W Alaska. Winters Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand & islands in C Pacific, small numbers regular Kenya & Persian Gulf.)



Andy Johnson

287. First-winter Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*, with Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula* (behind), Hayling Island, Hampshire, October 2013.

Semipalmated Plover *Charadrius semipalmatus*

(0, 3, 1) Very rare, first in 1978, last in 2012

Hampshire Black Point, Hayling Island, first-winter, 17th–29th October, photo (A. C. Johnson *et al.*); also seen Sussex (plate 287).

Sussex Pilsey Sands, Chichester Harbour, first-winter, 18th–21st October, photo (C. B. Collins, D. Cooper, B. Kay *et al.*); also seen Hampshire.

(Breeds Alaska & across N Canada to Baffin Island & Newfoundland. Winters from Atlantic & Pacific shores of southern USA to S South America.)

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (4, 51, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable

Lancashire & North Merseyside Alston Wetland, 7th April, photo (G. Thomas *et al.*).

(Breeds S Alaska, S Canada & throughout USA to Mexico. Northern breeders migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico to Columbia. Other races resident Caribbean & South America.)



Margaret Sharpe

288. Adult male Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus*, with Ringed Plover *C. hiaticula*, Lossiemouth, Moray & Nairn, July 2013.

Lesser Sand Plover *Charadrius mongolus* (0, 5, 1) Very rare, first in 1991, last in 2004

Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth, adult male *C. m. mongolus*, 16th July, photo (M. Sharpe) (plate 288).

(Nominate *mongolus* group breeds mountains & tundra of Arctic E Siberia, Kamchatka & Komandorskiye (Commander) Islands. Distinct *atrifrons* group breeds from C Pamir & Tien Shan Mountain ranges S to N Kashmir & E to the Tibetan Plateau. Winters along tropical coasts of S & E Africa, Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, S China, SE Asia & Australia.)

Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus* (0, 7, 1) Very rare, first in 1974, last in 2009

Shetland Mid Yell and Whalefirth, Yell, juvenile, 30th September to 2nd October, photo (D. M. Pullan *et al.*) (plate 289).

It is often the case that a long-staying rarity results in the location of something else of interest, as an influx of observers brings more keen eyes to survey an area, and this was certainly the case here. Yell remains one of the most underwatched islands in Shetland. Despite the recent dramatic increase in visiting birders in autumn, Yell usually merits little more than a few quick searches in between ferries to and from Unst or Fetlar. In September 2013, however, a long-staying 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *Sylvia cantillans albistriata* at Mid Yell meant that most birding groups spent a little more time on the island. One such group was led by Dave Pullan and, after visiting the Subalpine Warbler, they stopped to scan the waders at the head of Mid Yell Voe (a site that has hosted more Bearded Seals *Erignathus barbatus* than rare waders). Dave was surprised to see a late whimbrel, but even more intrigued by its appearance, noting first the dark underwing, as it flew off with two Eurasian Curlews *N. arquata*, then the diagnostic dark rump (Pullan 2014).



Dave Pullan

289. Juvenile Hudsonian Whimbrel *Numenius hudsonicus*, Mid Yell, Shetland, September 2013.

This was the fourth Hudsonian Whimbrel for Shetland (including two on Fair Isle), and the eighth for Britain. The fact that it was the sixth bird since 2000 suggests that the species may be becoming more frequent, although it was the first since a run of four in three years in 2007–09.

The first five British records were all found between May and August. There were two in May, including the first for Britain, on Fair Isle on 27th–31st May 1955, and a presumed returning bird at Goldcliff Lagoons (Gwent) on 6th–7th May 2000 and 3rd–4th May 2002. The only bird found in June was the long-staying first-summer on Walney Island (Cumbria), present from 14th June to 19th August 2007. The second for Britain, presumably an adult, was on Out Skerries (Shetland) from 24th July to 8th August 1974, while an adult was on Fair Isle on 29th–31st August 2007. The Yell bird is the third successive September juvenile, following others on St Mary's (Scilly) on 5th–28th September 2008 and South Uist (Outer Hebrides) on 12th September 2009. For anyone hoping to find a Hudsonian Whimbrel in Britain, the message seems to be that they can be found at almost any time and place that European Whimbrels would normally be present. Having said that, the three Irish records (1957, 1980 and 2011) match the Yell bird in timing, all being found between 20th September and 1st October.

(Breeds on tundra of W & N Alaska & N Canada E to Hudson Bay. Migrates through Canada & USA to winter coastal regions of S USA, S to Chile & Brazil.)

Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris* (0, 0, 0)

1998 Northumberland Druridge Pools, first-summer, probably female, 4th–7th May, photo, previously accepted (*Brit. Birds* 95: 494) but now considered not proven following review (*Brit. Birds* 107: 389–404).

(Formerly bred W Siberia N of Omsk & migrated SW to winter throughout Mediterranean basin W to Morocco. Serious population decline in 20th century & currently no breeding or wintering areas known.)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Calidris falcinellus* (15, 228, 1) About six per year; stable

Yorkshire Patrington Outstray, 18th May, photo (J. Grist, R. J. Swales).

1950 Lancashire & North Merseyside Freckleton SF, 28th September to 7th October (A. Harrison, N. Harwood, H. Shorrock) (*Brit. Birds* 44: 316–317).

The Freckleton bird was not previously in the BBRC database, having occurred before the formation of the Committee in 1958. However, our middle statistic now deals with numbers back to 1950, in line with other European Rarities Committees, and the Lancashire bird is considered acceptable by the relevant local records committee.

(Nominate race breeds N Norway, Sweden & Finland, & Arctic Russia where distribution uncertain. Migrates through E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas to winter Persian Gulf & W India to Sri Lanka, with small numbers coastal E Africa. E Asian race *sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula E to Kolyma River delta, & winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* (0, 30, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Cheshire & Wirral Neumann's Flash, adult, 29th August to 2nd September, photo (G. F. J. Baker, M. Taylor *et al.*), presumed same Sandbach Flashes, 2nd–7th September, photo (D. Norbury *et al.* per Cheshire Recorder).

(Breeds North America from NE Alaska to Hudson Bay, Canada. Migrates through interior & E USA to winter C South America from E Bolivia & S Brazil to NE Argentina. Occasionally winters N to Mexico, Caribbean & S USA.)

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (1, 248, 6) About six per year; increasing

Argyll Loch a' Phuill, Tiree, juvenile, 5th September, photo (J. Bowler, K. Gillon).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge WWT, juvenile, 7th–10th October, photo (J. Lees *et al.* per Gloucestershire Recorder).

Lincolnshire Frampton Marsh RSPB, adult, 24th–26th July, photo (J. Savory, T. Williams *et al.*).

Orkney Wester Sand, Holm, Mainland, juvenile, 31st August, photo (K. E. Hague).



Steve Duffield

290. Two juvenile Baird's Sandpipers *Calidris bairdii*, Stoneybridge, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, September 2013.

Outer Hebrides Stoneybridge, South Uist, two juveniles, 10th–14th September, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*) (plate 290).

2012 Shetland Baltasound, Unst, juvenile, 26th November, photo (R. J. Brookes).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia on Chukotskiy Peninsula & Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska & Arctic Canada to N Baffin Island & NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 125, 11) About four per year; increasing

Argyll Gott Bay then Clachan, Tiree, juvenile, 6th–12th September, photo (K. Gillon *et al.*). Black Mill Bay, Luing, adult, 7th September, photo (D. C. Jardine).

Cheshire & Wirral Hoylake Shore, adult, 21st September (A. M. Conlin, J. E. Turner *et al.*).

Cornwall Long Rock, Marazion, juvenile, 7th–9th September, photo (M. T. Elliott *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 412).

Dorset Ferrybridge, juvenile, 1st September, photo (S. Carey *et al.*), presumed same Brownsea Island, 2nd–3rd September and Abbotsbury 4th–5th September, photo (per birding information services).

Hampshire Keyhaven Marshes and Pennington Marshes, juvenile, 6th–7th September, photo (L. M. Fuller, M. Hastings *et al.* per Hampshire Recorder).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, juvenile, 10th–11th September, photo (M. Casemore, P. Trodd *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Preesall Sands, Knott End-on-Sea, first-winter, 12th November, photo (C. G. Batty *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Ordais, Bragar, Lewis, juvenile, 30th August to 1st September, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*) (plate 291). Loch Paible, North Uist, juvenile, 1st–5th September, photo (B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Gann Estuary, Dale, adult, 3rd–5th September, photo (D. Astins, D. Grimwood *et al.*).

2012 Dumfries & Galloway The Wig, Loch Ryan, juvenile, 8th–13th September, photo (G. Chambers, P. N. Collin, S. Grover).

2011 Yorkshire Kilnsea, juvenile, 10th September, photo (J. M. Turton *et al.*).

An excellent year – the third-best ever – although there is a possibility that the same individual is responsible for more than one record. The three sightings in Dorset seem most likely to involve just one bird (judging by timings and plumage similarities), which illustrates how far individuals can range in a short period – from Ferrybridge, east to Brownsea Island, then returning west

Michael McKee



291. Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, with Dunlin *C. alpina* (behind), Loch Ordais, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, September 2013.

to Abbotsbury – a looping tour of around 80 km. There is also a case for the Dorset bird moving to Hampshire and perhaps even then on to Kent, but these sightings are counted as separate birds.

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island & coastal Labrador. Has bred extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains & E seaboard of USA to winter C America & coasts of tropical South America to Brazil & Peru.)

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (0, 238, 4) About 4–5 per year; decreasing

Highland Broadford, juvenile/first-winter, 16th August, photo (B. McMillan, A. McNee, G. R. Rawcliffe).

Isle of Wight Yarmouth, adult female, 18th–23rd June, photo (C. Dudley, T. W. Henderson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 298; 107: plate 292).

Norfolk Cley Marshes, first-winter, 16th–19th September, photo (T. Williams *et al.*).

Shetland Sand, Mainland, adult, 10th–15th October, photo (G. Smith *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

1995 Essex Old Hall Marshes, female, 18th June to 13th July, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 89: 504).

1980 Essex Chigborough Lakes, 6th–10th September, note revised location (*Brit. Birds* 74: 473).

(Breeds interior W Canada S to California & throughout Midwest states of USA; also S Ontario. Most migrate through interior USA & winter South America from Peru S to Argentina & Chile.)

John Stanton



292. Adult female Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor*, Yarmouth, Isle of Wight, June 2013.

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0, 75, 1) About two per year; stable or decreasing

Sussex Rye Harbour, 25th May, photo (S. H. Linington *et al.*).

In terms of date, location and length of stay this is a very typical record. Late May is the peak time for records in Britain, while one-day stays account for about half of all records. Two notable exceptions are a bird that overwintered on the Plym Estuary (Devon) in 1973/74 and another that spent virtually a full year on the Blyth Estuary (Northumberland) in 1990/91. The Terek Sandpiper is more of a coastal species here than many sandpipers, reflecting its preferred habitat both on migration and on its wintering grounds, where it feeds largely on crabs.

In the Baltic, the small Finnish population around the Gulf of Bothnia has decreased to 5–10 pairs, while in the St Petersburg region of Russia the population seems to be increasing, albeit with considerable fluctuations, and there are now some 20–60 breeding pairs there. However, its population is thought to be stable across much of its vast Russian breeding range, which does not include the river from which it derives its name (Helcom 2013; www.birdlife.org).

(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, & Belarus. To E, breeds widely throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters along coasts of S & E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Australasia.)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 183, 3) About four per year; stable or increasing

Cornwall Wadebridge, adult, 10th–14th May, photo (P. Maker *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Northumberland Foxton Bends, River Aln, 27th–30th July, photo (A. Cowell, M. Shaw *et al.*).

Staffordshire Belvide Resr, adult, 26th May, photo (S. Nuttall *et al.*).

2012 Outer Hebrides Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, juvenile, 6th–19th September, note revised dates, *Brit. Birds* 106: 594.

(Breeds North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.)

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (6, 25, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Kent Coldharbour Lagoon, Reculver, adult, 10th September, photo (A. Luckhurst).

(Breeds from S Alaska across subarctic Canada E to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates throughout USA to winter coastal S USA, C America, Caribbean & South America.)

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (19, 317, 11) About seven per year; stable or increasing

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd WWT, 7th July to 29th October, photo (L. Evans, R. Hunt, W. Thomas *et al.*).

Cornwall Marazion Marsh RSPB, first-summer, 2nd–3rd May, photo (M. J. Spicer *et al.*); also seen Devon. Roseland Peninsula, adult, 19th August (S. Croft, S. Vandome). Walmsley Sanctuary, adult, 3rd September, photo (S. Stanbury). Hayle Estuary RSPB, juvenile/first-winter, 6th October, photo (B. & K. Barnacle *et al.*).

Devon Tamerton Creek, Plymouth, first-winter, 20th October 2012 to 19th April, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 595–596); also seen Cornwall. Dawlish Warren NNR, juvenile, 9th September, photo (P. Chambers, S. G. Edwards), presumed same Exeter then Bowling Green Marsh RSPB, 12th September to 5th October, photo (per birding information services).

Essex West Canvey Marsh RSPB, adult, 17th September, photo (J. Lowen *et al.*); also seen Kent.

Hampshire Stansore Point, Lepe CP, first-winter, 10th November into 2014, photo (P. Fawkes *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe Pools RSPB, adult, 23rd September to 12th October, photo (A. Worthy *et al.* per Kent Recorder), presumed same Higham Bight and Higham Marsh, 18th October into 2014 (P. Larkin); also seen Essex.

Orkney The Loons and Loch of Banks RSPB, Mainland, adult, 29th June (P. Cosgrove *et al.*),

presumed same Kirbist then Loch Gretchen, North Ronaldsay, 6th July, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).
Pembrokeshire Gann Estuary, Dale, juvenile, 4th September, photo (D. J. Astins, M. Powell per Pembrokeshire Recorder).

Shetland Pool of Virkie, Mainland, juvenile, 16th, 21st and 29th September (R. M. Fray, A. Hayden *et al.*), presumed same Clevigarth, Mainland, 30th September to 5th October, photo (J. Kay *et al.*).

Suffolk Havergate Island RSPB, adult/first-summer, 20th–21st April, photo (R. Straton *et al.*).

2001 Essex Manningtree, adult, 10th–12th October, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 95: 495).

1950 Cambridgeshire Peterborough SF, 16th May (J. W. Parker) (*Brit. Birds* 43: 404–406).

1950 Lothian Aberlady Bay, 13th May (H. G. Frew, J. G. B. Gibson, D. I. M. Wallace) (*Brit. Birds* 43: 404–406).

In a similar situation to that described above for the 1950 Broad-billed Sandpiper record, the two 1950 records were previously omitted from the BBRC database for the 1950–57 period.

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska & Canada, E to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean & C America to Chile & Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (6, 132, 1) About 3–4 per year; stable or decreasing

Outer Hebrides Kyles Paible, North Uist, 30th December into 2014, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. Kemp, B. Rabbitts *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 62).

(Breeds Ukraine & W Russia, & occasionally Finland & Baltic countries. To E, breeds in forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia & NE China. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, & Indian subcontinent E to S China & SE Asia; also Australia.)

Short-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus griseus* (0, 3, 1) Very rare, all since 1999

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 17th November into 2014, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Although there are just four records in total, the Orkney bird was the third in two years and its arrival date was the latest so far. The suggestion that this run of records reflects an increase in observer knowledge and ability seems unlikely, given that dowitchers have been given close scrutiny for many years. There are now a couple of records from West Africa – Senegal in October 2012 (www.birdforum.net) and Ghana from 21st September 2010 to 15th May 2011 (Robert Dowsett pers. comm.) – the latter proving that one has already wintered on this side of the Atlantic. How long before a smart, summer-plumaged adult turns up here in the spring?

(Three races breed in N America; race *caurinus* breeds from S Alaska to W Canada, race *hendersoni* breeds interior C Canada W of Hudson Bay, & nominate race breeds NE Canada from Ontario to Labrador. Migrates along both coastlines & interior USA to winter from coastal S USA to coastal Peru & Brazil.)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (6, 232, 5) About five per year; stable

Argyll Ardnave Loch, Islay, adult, 1st May, photo (J. M. Dickson, J. R. How, M. McGregor).

Carmarthenshire Penclacwydd WWT, adult, 28th July to 1st August, photo (W. Thomas *et al.*); presumed same as Carmarthenshire 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 597–598.

East Glamorgan Rhaslas Pond, Merthyr Tydfil, juvenile, 8th–14th October, photo (M. T. Hogan *et al.*).

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, adult, 31st July to 19th November, photo (M. Cooper *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, juvenile/first-winter, 4th October 2012 to 24th April, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 597–598.

Outer Hebrides Ness, Lewis, 29th April, photo (S. E. Duffield, B. A. E. Marr).

Pembrokeshire Gann Estuary, Dale, first-winter, 1st January to 13th April, photo (C. Hurford *et al.*) (plate 293).

2011 Ayrshire Lochlea, Tarbolton, juvenile, 7th–17th October, note revised location (*Brit. Birds* 105: 583).

2007 Essex Stour Estuary, Mistley and Manningtree, 10th March to 6th April, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 101: 540).



Richard Crossen

293. First-winter Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus*, Gann Estuary, Pembrokeshire, January 2013.

1986 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 14th October 1985 to 30th January, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 79: 548, 97: 581).

(Breeds Arctic Siberia W to Lena River delta, & coastal tundra of W & N Alaska, E to Mackenzie River, Canada. Migrates through USA to winter coastal S USA to N/C America.)

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (532, 166, 1) About three per year; stable

Yorkshire Beacon Lane, Kilnsea, first-winter, 14th–16th September, later found dead, photo (J. W. Cooper, P. Wragg *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 413; 107: plate 294).



Steve Young/Birdwatch

294. First-winter Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Kilnsea, Yorkshire, September 2013.

(Scarce & local breeder Norway & Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller & fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W & N Siberia E to Yenisey River. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (32, 71, 0) Rare, about one per year; stable

1999 Nottinghamshire Lound GP, Idle Valley, adult, 13th June (A. Lakin), presumed same as Norfolk 1999 (*Brit. Birds* 93: 529).

A belated extra record for a well-watched bird, which arrived in 1994 and was then seen annually up to 1999. The Notts sighting was the penultimate one, before its final appearance, in Norfolk, at Berney Marshes on 17th June. Our database logs that final sighting as the 28th move it made, during which time it visited Kent, Norfolk, Northamptonshire, Nottinghamshire, Suffolk, Warwickshire and Yorkshire!

(Breeds locally throughout Mediterranean basin from N Africa & S Iberia to Black Sea, most in S Spain, Portugal & Greece. To E, breeds SW Asia to Pakistan & Kazakhstan but distribution highly fragmented. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Another race resident Africa.)

Black-winged Pratincole *Glareola nordmanni* (2, 34, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Kent Swale NNR, Sheppey, 26th June, photo (A. & J. A. McKee *et al.*).

1960 Essex Abberton Resr, 28th August to 18th September, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 54: 185).

(European breeders confined to N Black Sea in Romania & Ukraine where rare & declining. To E, more numerous across steppes of S Russia to E Kazakhstan. Winters NE Namibia & Botswana, S to N Cape & E to W Natal, South Africa, & W Swaziland. Some apparently regularly winter Ethiopia.)

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (1, 41, 2) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Dorset Portland Harbour, 26th–31st December, photo (D. & P. Saunders *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 63, 295).

Yorkshire Filey, 3rd December, photo (M. J. Pearson).

(Breeds Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard, NE Norway & Novaya Zemlya. Outside Europe, breeds on islands off N Siberia into Bering Sea, S to Kuril, Komandorskiye, Aleutian & Pribilof Islands. Also W Alaska & N Canada from Baffin Island to Hudson Bay, Labrador coast & W Greenland. Winters among open leads in pack ice or at sea from Barents Sea S to N Norway, S Greenland, & along Labrador coast S to NE coastal USA. Other populations winter N Pacific, S to N Japan.)



Steve Young/Birdwatch

295. Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, Portland Harbour, Dorset, December 2013.



Graham Catley

296. Adult Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus*, Farne Islands, Northumberland, July 2013.

Bridled Tern *Onychoprion anaethetus* (1, 22, 1) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Cleveland Saltholme RSPB, adult, 6th July, photo (A. G. Pitches, C. & M. Small *et al.*); also seen Isle of May, North-east Scotland, Northumberland.

Isle of May Fife, adult, 26th July, photo (M. Newell *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, North-east Scotland, Northumberland.

North-east Scotland Cairnburg, Fraserburgh, adult, 4th August (M. B. Cowie), presumed same Ythan Estuary, 8th August, photo (M. Souter *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Isle of May, Northumberland.

Northumberland Farne Islands, adult, 1st–4th July, 13th–24th July and 15th–19th August, photo (W. Scott, R. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 299; 107: plate 296), presumed same Cresswell Pond and East Chevington, 5th–8th July, photo (R. Stonehouse *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Isle of May, North-east Scotland.

Is this Bridled Tern trying to beat the performance of the Collared Pratincole (above)? Clocking up four counties and eight locations in 2013, it has made an impressive start, and we know it has returned, visiting new sites, in 2014.

(Tropical seas. West Indies & Atlantic population breeds Banc d'Arguin, Mauritania, Pagalu, Gulf of Guinea & widely throughout Caribbean S to offshore N Venezuela. Other populations breed from Red Sea & Arabian Gulf locally through Indian Ocean to SE China, Philippines, & N Australia. Northern populations migratory, wintering at sea to S of breeding areas.)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (51, 295, 2) About three per year; stable or decreasing

Lincolnshire Kirkby on Bain GP, adult, 18th June, photo (J. P. Siddle *et al.*).

Shetland Scatness and Pool of Virkie, Mainland, 27th–31st July, photo (S. J. Minton *et al.*), presumed same Loch of Spiggie, 29th July (P. V. Harvey).

(In Europe, small population breeds N Germany & Denmark. Widespread though local Spain, elsewhere colonies small & isolated. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey & SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & NW China, with isolated population NE China. European population winters coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent & SE Asia. Other races occur Australia & the Americas.)

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (26, 270, 6) About five per year, influx 1988 (18); decreasing

Cheshire & Wirral Acre Nook Sand Quarry, first-summer, 24th–29th July, photo (G. & S. Barber *et al.*); also seen Staffordshire.



297. First-summer Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia*, Rudyard Reservoir, Staffordshire, July 2013.

Dorset Radipole Lake then West Bexington, adult (ringed), 11th–12th June, photo (D. C. Chown, M. J. Morse *et al.*); also seen Hampshire.

Hampshire Testwood Lakes, adult (ringed), 9th June, photo (I. Pibworth); also seen Dorset. Normandy Marsh, Lymington, adult, 28th July (P. Fawkes).

Kent St Margarets Bay, 5th August (P. Chantler, R. Heading).

Norfolk Hopton, 10th–11th July (B. J. Small, I. N. Smith).

Staffordshire Rudyard Resr, first-summer, 26th–29th July, photo (A. & P. G. Barratt, A. Sherlock *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 324; 107: plate 297); also seen Cheshire & Wirral.

Yorkshire Spurn, adult, 25th April, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

(European population breeds Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden & Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia & E China. European birds winter W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, Asian birds winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations occur Australia, S Africa & North America.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (23, 182, 3) About 4–5 per year, influx 2009 (25); increasing

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 23rd April, different adult on 25th April, photo (C. J. Stone, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); also seen Somerset.

Derbyshire Carsington Water, adult, 24th April (M. Pass); also seen Staffordshire.

Gloucestershire Witcombe Resr, adult, 22nd–23rd April, photo (D. Dine *et al.*), presumed same Frampton-on-Severn, 26th April, photo (S. Brown, A. & J. McLellan); presumed same as one of two first seen at Shapwick Heath, Somerset (below).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, two adults, 21st–22nd April, photo (S. Miller *et al.*); presumed one of same, Durleigh Resr, 22nd and 27th April (B. J. Hill *et al.*); also seen Avon, Gloucestershire.

Staffordshire Blithfield Resr, adult, 24th April (P. D. Hyde, G. J. Mant); also seen Derbyshire.

The above interpretation of the number of birds and their movements is just that – an interpretation – but the analysis was done with some care and a detailed look at times and distances involved. Unfortunately, any plumage differences that might have facilitated a more precise analysis were just not apparent. On dates alone the Staffordshire/Derbyshire bird could also be one of the Avon/Gloucestershire/Somerset individuals, but we have counted it as different.

(Breeds in small, scattered colonies through S & E Europe from Iberia to Poland. Numerous & widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters tropical W & C Africa & from Nile Delta to E Africa. Other populations occur Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa & Australia.)

Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea* (84, 54, 9) About 1–2 per year; stable

Co. Durham Seaburn, juvenile, 30th November (P. T. Bell).

Highland Tarbat Ness, juvenile, 5th December (D. Tanner). Droman Pier, juvenile,



Steve Young/Birdwatch

298. Juvenile Ivory Gull *Pagophila eburnea*, Patrington Haven, Yorkshire, December 2013.

18th–21st December, photo (D. O'Driscoll).

Northumberland Seahouses and Beadnell, two juveniles, 7th December, photo (G. Woodburn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 24).

Orkney Knowe of Stenso, Evie, Mainland, juvenile, 12th–14th December, photo (I. Smith, S. J. Williams *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Baleshare, North Uist, juvenile, 4th December, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*). Ness, Lewis, juvenile, 18th–29th December, photo (H. MacInnes *et al.*).

Yorkshire Patrington Haven, juvenile, 15th–25th December, photo (G. E. Dobbs *et al.*) (plate 298), presumed same Sammy's Point, Easington, 22nd–24th December, photo (J. Hewitt *et al.*).

2007 Outer Hebrides Howmore, South Uist, juvenile, 10th November (T. J. Sykes *et al.*).

An exceptional arrival of nine juveniles, all of them in November and December and none making it through to the New Year. The northern locations are to be expected and fit in well not only with the pattern of previous records but also with other records at the same time in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The bird in Yorkshire was much admired and its protracted stay was perhaps aided by the constant supply of fish it received!

(In Europe, breeds Svalbard. Elsewhere, restricted to islands in the high Arctic between Franz Josef Land & Arctic Canada, with small numbers N & SE Greenland. Wintering range poorly known, but apparently within or close to edge of pack ice.)

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 189, 14) About six per year; increasing

Argyll Traigh nan Gilean then Loch a' Phuill, Tiree, first-summer, 18th June, photo (J. Bowler).

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 27th April, photo (C. J. Stone, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Berkshire Theale GP, adult, 26th April, photo (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Caithness Thurso, adult, 30th March to 6th April, photo (D. Roche per birding information services).

Cornwall Siblyback Resr, adult, 15th–16th May, photo (M. Beer).

Devon Bowling Green Marsh RSPB and Dawlish Warren, adult, 2nd–15th May, photo (N. Potter, T. Worfolk *et al.*), presumed same Teignmouth and Dawlish Warren, 16th September to 31st



299. Adult Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia*, Cross Ness, Greater London, July 2013.

December, photo (L. Allnat *et al.* per Devon Recorder); presumed same as Devon 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 601–602.

Co. Durham Whitburn and Boldon, adult, 10th–15th August, photo (T. I. Mills *et al.*), presumed same Whitburn, 14th September, photo (D. Fraser *et al.*); presumed same as Durham 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 601–602.

East Glamorgan Ogmere Estuary, adult, 5th January to 13th March, photo (P. G. Lansdown *et al.* per East Glamorgan

Recorder), presumed same 14th–16th April, photo (P. Roberts *et al.*). Cardiff Foreshore then Cardiff Bay, adult, 12th January to 5th April, photo (P. Bristow, M. Powell, G. N. Smith *et al.*; presumed same as Cardiff Bay, East Glamorgan 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 601–602.

Greater London Cross Ness, adult, 6th–7th July, photo (M. F. Robinson *et al.*) (plate 299).

Kent Elmley Marshes RSPB, first-winter, 28th April to 6th May, photo (S. L. Huggins *et al.*), presumed same Oare Marshes, 22nd May to 19th August, and Swalecliffe, 27th May, photo (M. E. Wright *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Red Nab, Heysham, adult, 13th July to 25th September, photo (I. Walker *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 325).

Northumberland Cresswell Pond, adult, 14th August, photo (T. R. Cleeves, M. Hepple). Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, adult, 29th October to 18th November, photo (D. & R. Forshaw *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Stoneybridge, South Uist, first-winter, 2nd February, photo (Y. Benting).

Sussex Eastbourne, adult, 27th January to 26th February, photo (D., D. R. & J. F. Cooper, B. Kay *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 115). Rye Harbour, first-summer, 20th July, photo (R. Billings, G. Kinnard).

It has been suggested that the bird at Thurso could well be the same individual which overwintered from September 2004 to April 2005, and was seen again in March–April 2008 and in March 2010. These sightings are in our database as separate birds, but this species often features as a returnee (see, for example, the East Glamorgan records). Perhaps a reassessment of just how many birds have been involved over the years is now due?

(Breeds widely across N North America from W & C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers & lakes in N USA, & S along both coasts of USA to Mexico & Caribbean.)

Ross's Gull *Rhodostethia rosea* (1, 91, 1) About two per year; stable or decreasing

Orkney Bay of Swartmill, Westray, adult, 4th November (D. Otter).

This species gets no commoner. In the four years 2009–12 there was just a single, one-day bird in 2010 (a first-winter at Machrihanish, Argyll, on 12th November). Another solitary record in 2013 appears to continue this trend, and confirms that Ross's Gull has never been anything other than

a top-drawer rarity and a prize find – notwithstanding the occasional years when slightly greater numbers occur – notably eight in 1993, six the following year and eight in 2002.

Ross’s Gulls remain in the high-Arctic region during the non-breeding season, generally keeping close to the edge of the pack ice. As might be expected, the majority of vagrants reaching Britain are found in the north, Shetland being the top county (with 17 records to date) followed by Yorkshire with 13. Birds have also been recorded farther down the east coast, in both Norfolk and Suffolk; Lincolnshire is a notable gap but it’s surely only a matter of time before one is seen there. Most records are from coastal sites, which again is what you might expect of this truly pelagic gull – the closest we have come to an inland record is perhaps the bird at Frampton Pools, Gloucestershire, in April 2006, or Marton Mere, Lancashire & North Merseyside, on 31st March 2008. Yet the species has been recorded from landlocked states in the USA so the appearance of one well away from the coast in Britain is surely not beyond the bounds of possibility. The species is quite well represented along the coastline of southwest Britain, Cornwall in particular, but the southeast segment of Hampshire, Sussex, Kent and Essex still awaits its first.

(Locally common on tundra of NE Siberia from Lena River E to at least Kolyma River. In Canada, rare & local breeder W Hudson Bay region, perhaps elsewhere. Siberian birds migrate E past Point Barrow, Alaska in September to unknown wintering area assumed to lie near edge of pack ice in Bering Sea or N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (1, 194, 1) About five per year, influxes 2005 (58), 2006 (22); stable

Orkney Warsetter and Bea Loch, Sanday, adult, 19th September to 13th October, photo (G. Garner, A. Whewell *et al.*).

1996 Highland Dornoch, first-summer/second-winter, 13th August to 12th October; note that this record was erroneously published twice before, in *Brit. Birds* 90: 483 and 91: 478.

(Breeds along E seaboard of USA from Maine S to Florida & Gulf coast, the Caribbean, & C America to N Venezuela. Southern populations largely resident but N breeders winter within southern breeding range.)

Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura* (0, 3, 1) Very rare, first in 1989, last in 2007
Highland Kinloch, Rum, 28th October to 3rd November, photo (S. Morris *et al.*) (plate 300).

Even though this is only the fourth to be discovered in Britain, a clear pattern of occurrence is emerging, since all four records have been found in late October or early November on an island off the Scottish coast (the Isle of Man is closer to Scotland than to any other part of the UK). Although the species is widespread and often abundant in the USA, a large part of the population is sedentary. It is only the more northerly breeding birds that migrate, reaching as far south as Panama in the winter. In his paper on North American land-birds in Britain, Bond (2014) rated its vagrancy potential as high.

Mourning Doves are prolific breeders and have been known to produce up to six broods in a year. Their population



Sean Morris

300. Mourning Dove *Zenaida macroura*, Kinloch, Rum, Highland, October 2013.

in the USA alone was estimated by the US Fish and Wildlife Service to be 349 million birds in 2013 (Seamans *et al.* 2013). Of these, it was estimated that 14.5 million were shot, although other estimates put the figure much higher. With all that hot lead scorching their undertail-coverts, is it surprising that some birds choose distance over direction?

(Breeds SE Alaska & S Canada from British Columbia to Nova Scotia, S throughout USA to Panama & West Indies. Some northern populations remain S Canada while others winter S to Panama.)

Barn Owl *Tyto alba*

Central European race, 'Dark-breasted Barn Owl' *T. a. guttata*

(–, [10], 0) Not yet determined

1996 Kent Dungeness RSPB, 30th October, found dead, photo (P. Akers, P. Makepeace, D. Walker).

(Race *guttata* mostly resident to N & E of nominate race, from Netherlands & Denmark, E to W Russia & S to Bulgaria, largely E of the 3°C January isotherm. Intergrades with nominate race are frequent towards W & S limits of its range.)

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (196, 210, 1) About three per year; stable

Moray & Nairn Ben Macdui, Cairngorms, adult male, 18th February to 1st March, photo (S. Andrews, J. Davies *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Grenitote and Sollas, North Uist, adult male, 1st April to 25th May, photo (P. Prior-Pitt *et al.* per Outer Hebrides Recorder), presumed same as North Uist 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 604. St Kilda, 12th June to 24th November, photo (per Outer Hebrides Recorder), presumed same as St Kilda 2012, *Brit. Birds* 106: 604.

There are few better experiences in birding than seeing a Snowy Owl, and the only new bird this year, the male on the snow-covered Ben Macdui plateau in winter, was a magnificent 'double whammy' of stunning bird in a wonderful location.

Snowy Owls may be large, but they are not always obvious, and long-staying individuals may go missing for weeks or even months at a time. On 'paper' (it's actually mainly on screen or online these days), Snowy Owls can, therefore, be something of a headache. They are very distinctive, but this means that they are occasionally reported by non-birders, and the often rudimentary descriptions are difficult to deal with – they often fail to mention such obvious features as eye colour or give an accurate assessment of size (and we all know that almost every species of bird has been misidentified at some stage). In addition, Snowy Owls aren't always easy to get close to, so it may be difficult to assess plumage features to establish whether birds are 'new'. The two birds in the Outer Hebrides in 2013 had both been present for some time, but establishing exactly how many birds have been in these islands over the last few years is problematic (the same is true for many long-lived species). The statistics probably overestimate the numbers involved, as there may be more returning birds than we think, but it is difficult to link records without definite evidence, while sometimes the pattern is only obvious with the benefit of a few years of hindsight.

(Breeds N Scandinavia & occasionally Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra & N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada & N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter but some resident or nomadic if food available.)

White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* (2, 5, 1) Very rare, last in 1988, 1991

Outer Hebrides Loch Direcleit, Tarbert and Loch Drinisadair, Harris, first-summer male, 24th–26th June, photo, later found dead, specimen at NMS, Edinburgh (M. Cocker, A. Gretton, M. I. & R. W. Myatt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plates 262, 300, 301; 107: plate 301).

1983 Orkney South Ronaldsay, 11th–12th June, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 77: 539).

White-throated Needletail was described in *Birding World* (26: 228–229) as the ultimate vagrant – and surely few who have witnessed this incredible species in Britain would disagree.

Connecting with one is the highlight of a life-time's twitching for some.

The bird on Harris was first noticed – but not identified – by Dick Myatt over Loch Direcleit on 24th June. The following day it flew over the heads of Mark Cocker and Adam Gretton as they walked through the nearby village of Tarbert (Gretton 2013). On 26th June, a small crowd gathered expectantly in Tarbert, where a nervous, hour-



Chris Bromley

301. First-summer male White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*, Harris, Outer Hebrides, June 2013.

long wait ensued before the near-mythical Needletail duly appeared over Loch Direcleit, proceeding to hunt insects for two hours, skimming over the heads of the now-jubilant twitchers in the process. When the bird returned after disappearing for more than two hours in the early afternoon, however, the merriment of the second wave of worshippers soon turned to horror as it collided with a wind turbine, providing a tragic end to the story.

This first-summer male (aged by moult contrast in the wings plus retained juvenile wing and tail feathers, sex determined from the museum skin) is the first to be seen in Britain since May–June 1991, when presumably the same bird appeared in four counties between Kent and Shetland. And it is the first twitchable one since the bird on Hoy, Orkney, between 28th May and 8th June 1988. The statistics show eight individuals, but it is conceivable that just four birds were really involved: the eight sightings in late spring between 1983 and 1991 may have involved just a single returning bird (Cottridge & Vinicombe 1996).

As things stand, the Harris bird is the 22nd European record, of which 19 have been discovered in spring, the majority between 20th May and 19th June, with outlying records on 21st April (Finland 1990) and 26th or 27th July (Hampshire 1879). There are three autumn records, between 21st October and mid November: singles in Malta in 1971, Spain in 1990 and Denmark in 2012 (Sanders *et al.* 1998). All four North American records of this species have been of singles in spring, all during 21st–26th May and all on the western Aleutian Islands, in 1974, 1978, 1984 and 1985 (Howell *et al.* 2014).

(Nominate race breeds W Siberia from region of Tomsk, E through S Siberia to Sakhalin, Kuril Islands, Japan and N China; winters Australia S to Tasmania. Race *H. c. nudipes* breeds Himalayas to N Yunnan, SW China, to Assam, NE India, perhaps also N Burma.)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 80, 5) About three per year; increasing

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, juvenile, 17th–23rd October, photo (J. B. Dunnett, G. Icton *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, also seen St Martin's and St Agnes, 16th April to 1st May, photo (R. L. Flood, W. H. Wagstaff *et al.*).

Norfolk Cley Marshes and Weybourne, juvenile, 23rd October, photo (P. A. Clarke, M. A. Golley *et al.*). Trimingham, two, 26th October (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania & Canary Islands across NW Africa & Middle East to Arabian Peninsula & coastal S Iran. Most winter N African tropics, but some remain S Europe.)

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 6, 1) Very rare, first in 1981, last in 2011

Lincolnshire Saltfleetby NNR, 12th June, photo (B. M. Clarkson); also seen Suffolk, Yorkshire. Suffolk Bawdsey, 29th May, photo (N. Mason, J. & M. Mountain), presumed same Trimley Marshes, 15th–16th June, photo (J. Rankin *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 302; 107: plate 302); also seen Lincolnshire, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Spurn, 12th June, photo (P. Collins *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire, Suffolk.

The Pacific Swift at Trimley Marshes in 2013 provided another generation of British twitchers with a realistic chance to see this species, the first such opportunity since the bird at Cley Marshes, Norfolk, on 30th May 1993 (Gantlett 1993). In a scenario curiously reminiscent of that Cley bird, the one at Trimley was first located just before 11.00 am – and from then on all those in pursuit will have been acutely aware that the bird at Cley remained for less than six hours. For the latecomers at Trimley, the knowledge that a 5-km walk lay ahead, coupled with the sight of a dramatic gathering of storm clouds that threatened to move all the feeding swifts on, made this one of the most stressful of twitches. And indeed, by 3.15 pm it did look as though all the swifts had moved on ahead of the inclement weather; newly arrived birders were treated to nothing more than a complete soaking. Then, at 4.00 pm, the bird was relocated over the marsh before giving a close flypast for a relieved and most appreciative crowd. The cheers and hugs showed that – 20 years on from Cley – twitching remains an emotional business! It remained on site for a second day to give others the chance to share in that emotion, but improving weather and clearing skies led to its premature departure early on the Sunday afternoon. As it drifted into the distance, late-comers may have struggled to eliminate the Common Swift *A. apus* with a white rump band, present at nearby Felixstowe Ferry two days later.

All four records of Pacific Swift in 2013 are treated here as just one individual roaming from Suffolk to Yorkshire, and back to Suffolk via Lincolnshire over a period of 19 days. As with many rare birds, the decision to classify separate sightings as the same or different individuals is little more than educated guesswork. Perhaps the bird that flew over Spurn on 12th June 2013 was the same individual recorded there on 1st July 2005, on 22nd and 26th June 2008, and again on 9th July 2011?

Spurn is the premier British site for observing Common Swift movements – especially when the wind is from the southwest – with over a quarter of a million logged over the last eight years, and a day total of 21,000 on 4th July 2010 (Smith 2013; www.trektellen.nl). Rarer swifts are also being actively searched for at Spurn – and with one Little Swift *A. affinis*, two Pallid Swifts *A. pallidus* and eight Alpine Swifts *A. melba* also recorded there during that period the extra effort is certainly proving worthwhile. Recent research into Common Swift movements using geolocators has shown that the overall migration speed in spring averages 336 km/day (Åkesson *et al.* 2012). However, the majority of the swifts at Spurn are presumably not actually migrating, but rather



Ian Curran

302. Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*, Trimley Marshes, Suffolk, June 2013.

relocating in response to bad weather, possibly as part of a journey of up to 2,000 km, reaching continental Europe (Wernham *et al.* 2002). Ringing data show that Common Swifts can live to at least 17 years of age, so it seems quite conceivable that individual vagrant Pacific Swifts have the potential to reappear for many years.

Away from Britain, all European reports of Pacific Swift fall between 10th May and 19th August, and come from Denmark (June 2010, May 2013, and two reports in May 2014), Sweden (July 1999, July 2005, August 2007, May 2013 and two reports in May 2014) and Germany (Mellum, Niedersachsen, on 28th May 2014; www.tarsiger.com). In Sweden, the repeated occurrence of an individual at the same inland site – Kvismaren, Örebro – on 15th May 2013, then again on 10th–11th May and 30th May 2014, adds further support to the theory that vagrant Pacific Swifts are perfectly capable of returning to Europe in subsequent years.

(Breeds W Siberia E to Kamchatka & Japan, S to Vietnam. Northern breeders winter throughout SE Asia & S to Australia.)

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (196, 117, 4) About 1–2 per year; stable or decreasing

Hampshire Broxhead Common, adult, 23rd–26th May, photo (A. James, J. Smith *et al.*); also seen Surrey.

Norfolk Holt Lowes, adult, 16th–19th June, photo (P. Colston *et al.*). Between Horsey and Winterton, adult, 5th–13th August, photo (M. Saunt *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 29th–30th September, photo (B. A. Taylor *et al.*).

Surrey Thursley Common, adult, 26th May (J. Murray, A. R. Pickett); also seen Hampshire.

(NW Africa & S Europe from Portugal to Greece, & locally through Balkan countries & E Poland to Estonia & E to Ukraine. More numerous from Turkey & S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia & C Asia to W China & N Pakistan. Some winter equatorial W Africa but most winter E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (9, 9, 1) Very rare, last in 2011

Devon Hope's Nose, Torquay, juvenile, 28th October, photo (S. Geary).

(Fragmented breeding range throughout Mediterranean basin from Portugal, Spain & Morocco E to Ukraine, Turkey & Caspian Sea, then E to E Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (222, 173, 4) About three per year; stable

Orkney Newark Bay, Deerness, immature white-morph, 31st January to 27th February (K. E. Hague), presumed same Deepdale, Stromness, Mainland, 1st–18th February, photo (E. & T. Wootton *et al.*),

Hoxa, South Ronaldsay, 26th February, photo (M. Gibson *et al.*), and Evie and Orphir, 3rd–25th April, photo (A. Knight, J. B. Ribbands, M. Sinclair, I. Watt).

Outer Hebrides Balranald, North Uist, immature white-morph, 1st December 2012 to 10th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 587), presumed same Askernish, South Uist, 10th January, photo (I. R. Thompson *et al.*).

303. Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus*, Paull, River Humber, Yorkshire, November 2013.



John Brattan

Balemores, North Uist, white-morph, 17th November, photo (S. E. Duffield).

Shetland Tresta, Fetlar, female, 26th March (R. M. Mellor).

Yorkshire Paull, River Humber, immature grey-morph, 24th November, photo (J. Brattan) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 247, 303).

2008 Cornwall Land's End area, roaming to Marazion, immature white-morph, 15th–18th December (M. Warren *et al.*), presumed same as Isles of Scilly 2008, *Brit. Birds* 102: 549.

1994 Co. Durham Hunstanworth Moor, white-morph, 21st November, note revised year, previously listed as 1995, *Brit. Birds* 89: 497.

(In Europe, most numerous Iceland & Norway, smaller populations breeding N Sweden, Finland & Arctic Russia. To E, breeds Arctic Siberia, Alaska, N Canada & Greenland. European birds mostly resident but high-Arctic breeders from N Canada & Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)

Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum* (0, 2, 0) Extremely rare, two records in 2008, 2010

2010 Norfolk Blakeney Point, first-winter, 25th–27th September, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*) (plate 304).

2008 Cornwall Nanjizal, first-winter, 9th–10th October, trapped, photo (K. A. Wilson *et al.*) (plate 305).

With little activity around their usual ringing site at Nanjizal, Kester and Ian Wilson left their nets to explore other parts of the valley. It was Kester who spotted a flycatcher with prominent wing-bars, tertial edges and eye-ring. Realising he had a first for Britain in his sights, he called his

father over. It was clearly an *Empidonax* flycatcher, but which one? Notoriously difficult to identify, especially when silent, *Empidonax* flycatchers represent the most challenging North American species group. In this case, Acadian *E. virescens*, Alder *E. alnorum* and Least *E. minimus* were already on the Western Palearctic list, all having been recorded in Iceland, while Yellow-bellied *E. flaviventris* and Willow *E. traillii* could also be considered as potential vagrants having similar breeding ranges and also being long-distance migrants.

Working through these possibilities, Acadian, Least and Yellow-bellied could be eliminated on plumage leaving just Alder and Willow. These two are the hardest of the genus to separate, except when in song, and were treated as a single species by the AOU until 1973. Even today, many birds, even in the hand, are not identified to species but recorded simply as



Adi Sheppard

304. First-winter Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*, Blakeney Point, Norfolk, September 2010.

'Traill's Flycatcher' – the former name for the combined species. A decision was therefore taken to trap the bird and obtain as good a set of photos and biometrics as possible. That proved to be a most prescient decision as the biometrics proved crucial in establishing the identification as Alder Flycatcher by allowing the elimination of all the other species. The photos also illustrated the supporting features that would have been hard to establish in the field. Interestingly, in the course of trapping, a DNA sample was recovered but this proved insufficient to confirm the species.

Amazingly, just two years later another was found in Britain, this time in the plantation on Blakeney Point. Again the prominent wing-bars, tertial fringes and eye-ring convinced the observers they were looking at an *Empidonax* flycatcher, and again its identity provoked much debate. As with the Cornwall bird, the assessment of this record was helped considerably by some excellent photos. Although the Norfolk flycatcher was not trapped, the plumage features shown by the photos established its identity. Clearly anyone lucky enough to come across an *Empidonax* flycatcher would do well to remember these lessons and garner as much information and as many good photos as possible. Should a bird this side of the Atlantic call, sound recordings too will be invaluable.

Stays of two and three days respectively enabled many observers to appreciate for the first time the problems in trying to identify these subtle flycatchers. If, after all this, one still feels daunted by 'empids', spare a thought for birders in the southern USA or Central America who, along with those mentioned here, have a whole suite of additional species to contend with on migration.

(Breeds S Canada from S British Columbia E to Nova Scotia, & NE USA from Michigan SE to New Jersey. Winters S America, mainly Colombia to Peru, but E to Venezuela & S to Argentina.)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 125, 2) About four per year; stable

Cornwall Prussia Cove, first-winter, 23rd October (M. Bishop *et al.*).

Fair Isle Easter Lother, 6th October, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, & USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter N South America. Other races resident South America.)

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 12, 5) Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Fife Balcomie, first-winter, 28th September, photo (J. & T. Drew *et al.*).

Hampshire Hook-with-Warsash, first-winter, 20th September, photo (R. H. Marchant *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Kirkton of Slains, Collieston, first-winter, 28th–29th September, photo (P. S. Crockett, C. N. Gibbins, P. Shepherd *et al.*) (plate 306).

Orkney Westness, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 24th–29th September, photo (A. McMillan, M. Warren *et al.*).

Shetland Wester Quarff, Mainland, first-winter, 27th–30th September, photo (A. Howe, D. Pointon *et al.*).

2001 Isles of Scilly Bryher, first-winter, 24th–28th September, photo (M. Anderson, M. J. Lawson, P. Simpson *et al.*), note revised observers, *Brit. Birds* 95: 516.

(Breeds Siberia from Ob River basin E to Sea of Okhotsk & Kamchatka, N Japan & throughout much of E China. Nominate *cristatus* winters Indian subcontinent & throughout SE Asia to Philippines, N Borneo & Indonesian islands.)



Ian Wilson

305. First-winter Alder Flycatcher *Empidonax alnorum*, Nanjizal, Cornwall, October 2008.

Harry Scott



306. First-winter Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Collieston, North-east Scotland, September 2013.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 91, 4) About three per year; stable

Lincolnshire Donna Nook, first-winter, 20th October (C. Atkin, S. Lorand *et al.*).
Shetland Ham, Foula, first-winter, 10th–12th October, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*). Brough, Whalsay, adult female, 17th–28th October, photo (A. & E. Benbow *et al.*).
Yorkshire Flamborough, first-winter, 15th October, photo (P. Cunningham *et al.*).
2001 Wiltshire Cotswold Water Park, first-winter, 28th October, photo (R. Baatsen, M. Coller), presumed same as Gloucestershire 2001 (*Brit. Birds* 95: 516).

(Breeds widely across arid regions of C Asia from Caspian Sea & W Iran E to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, N Pakistan, S Mongolia & NW China, with isolated subspecies in Zaidam depression, N Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE & E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran & NW Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (21, 166, 4) About 2–3 per year; stable

Kent Capel Fleet, adult, 5th–6th October, photo (M. C. Buckland, G. Howard *et al.*).
Northumberland Holy Island, male, 19th–20th May, photo (D. A. & S. King *et al.*). Newton Links, first-winter, 13th–26th November, photo (G. Woodburn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 25).
Suffolk Aldringham Walks, Leiston, first-winter, 15th–23rd September, photo (P. & R. Burman, J. H. Grant *et al.*).

The status of Lesser Grey Shrike in Britain has remained relatively stable over the past six decades

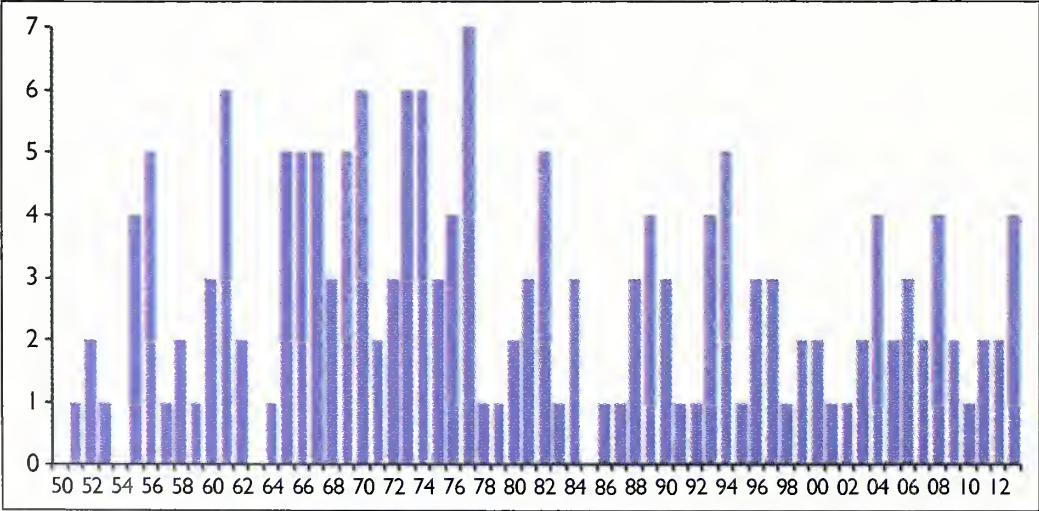


Fig. 2. Records of Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* in Britain, 1950–2013.

(fig. 2), and the 2013 records show a familiar pattern of occurrence. The long-term mean shows 2.6 arrivals per year with 48% of those during the period between August and November. Records were slightly more frequent during the 1960s and 1970s but even then were never numerous. Globally

this species is declining somewhat, particularly in Iberia, but because of the vast breeding range it covers it is still treated as a species of least conservation concern (www.birdlife.org). Statistically, Shetland is the best county in Britain for this species (22 records since 1950), followed by Norfolk (18) then Fair Isle (14) – but the east coast bias in 2013 is typical.

The mix of immature and adult birds in autumn is not unusual. Keen rarity finders will be well aware that while, for most vagrant passerines, immatures usually account for the great majority of records, shrikes are almost unique in that there is a significant proportion of adults in autumn, although the reasons for this pattern are unclear.

(Breeds Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France & NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia & Kazakhstan to NW China & SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique & N South Africa.)

Woodchat Shrike *Lanius senator*

West Mediterranean islands race, 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *L. s. badius* (0, 9, 1) Very rare, last in 2010

Orkney Pierowall, Westray, male, 26th May, photo (R. B. Wynn *et al.*) (plate 307); also seen Shetland.

Shetland Ham, Foula, male, 28th May, photo (D. & G. Atherton, A. Coia, K. D. Shaw); also seen Orkney.

Some birders opt to take their birding holidays in Britain, choosing ever more remote spots in an attempt to break new ground. Russell Wynn is one of those and in 2013 he decided that Westray, the northwest corner of Orkney, looked worth a visit in spring. After confirming that Long-tailed *Stercorarius longicaudus* and Pomarine Skuas *S. pomarinus* did, indeed, pass Noup Head on the island, the last full day of a two-week trip dawned without a major rarity having been found. So a Woodchat Shrike, still rare in Scotland, was a welcome find; and even better when the lack of white at the base of the primaries confirmed that it was a bird of the so-called 'Balearic' race (Wynn 2013). There was no sign of it the next day, but two days later what must have been the same bird was relocated on Foula, this time found by Ken Shaw, another island-holiday pioneer.

This is the first record of this race in Scotland and only the tenth for Britain. The subspecies was added to the British List only in 2004, on the basis of records in Dorset in 1986 and Norfolk and Kent in 1995 (Small & Walbridge 2005). Two other older records have been accepted since, including the current first for Britain, at Sizewell, Suffolk, on 15th–21st June 1980. The Scottish bird is just the fifth in the ten years since this race was firmly put on birders' 'radar', suggesting that it is genuinely rare. This may not be that surprising, given its relatively restricted range.

Other than the Orkney/Shetland bird, and the one in Norfolk, all other British records were found south of a line from the Severn to the Thames. The ten records cover the period from April to July, with little pattern: two in April (the earliest in Cornwall on 10th–11th April 2010), three in both May and June, and two in July (the latest in Kent on 15th–21st July 1995).

(Race *badius* restricted to W Mediterranean islands including Balearics, Corsica & Sardinia, E to Elba & Capraia. Winters W Africa, from Ivory Coast to N Cameroon.)



307. Male 'Balearic Woodchat Shrike' *Lanius senator badius*, Westray, Orkney, May 2013.

Russell Wynn

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 270, 9) About nine per year; stable

Dorset Longham Lakes, 27th November to 1st December, photo (per birding information services).

Gwent Uskmouth, Newport Wetlands RSPB, male, 7th–9th November, photo (R. de Borde, M. Meehan *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness RSPB: male (ringed), 5th November 2012 to 20th April, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 606–607; two immature/females, 9th February to 10th April, photo (G. Spinks *et al.*); adult male, 20th April (A. Lawson *et al.*); 30th September (D. Walker); male, 24th–30th October, joined by a juvenile on 26th October, photo (A. Last, T. Sherlock, E. Urquhart).

Sussex Pett Level, first-winter, 30th October, trapped, photo (M. Cooper, I. Hunter *et al.*).

2011 Essex/Greater London Rainham Marshes RSPB, two adults, 7th–17th February (H. Vaughan *et al.*), presumed same as Greater London/Essex 2010 (*Brit. Birds* 104: 595–596).

2007 Essex/Greater London Rainham Marshes, three, 22nd December 2006 to 27th March, note revised numbers and dates, and presumed same as birds seen earlier in 2006 (*Brit. Birds* 100: 744; 101: 567).

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.)

Crested Lark *Galerida cristata* (12, 11, 1) Very rare, last in 2009, 2012

Kent Kingsdown Beach, 1st June, photo (N. Jarman).

(Mostly resident throughout continental Europe N to Denmark, E through C Asia to NE China & Korean Peninsula. To S breeds across Africa S to Sierra Leone E to Somalia, also E through Arabian Peninsula & Iran to NW & N India.)

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Northern race, 'Northern Long-tailed Tit' *A. c. caudatus* (–, [27], 5)

Not yet determined

Shetland Halligarth, Unst, five, 3rd November, three remaining to 4th, photo (C. C. Rodger *et al.*).

(Race *caudatus* N & E Europe, & N Asia E through Siberia & N Mongolia to Kamchatka, Hokkaido & NE China. Largely resident or dispersive outside the breeding season.)

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (11, 323, 16) About eight per year; stable

Co. Durham Whitburn Coastal Park, first-winter, 26th–28th August, photo (A. Kinghorn *et al.*).

Fair Isle Gully, first-winter, 4th September, trapped, photo (D. Parnaby, B. Rosser *et al.*).

Kristal Kame, first-winter, 5th September, presumed same Pund, 6th September, photo (R. Cope, W. T. S.

Miles *et al.*). Nether Taft, first-winter, 13th September, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Observatory and Shirva, first-winter, 14th–15th October, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (R. Cope, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Newford Duck Pond, St Mary's, 5th–10th October, photo (K. A. & M. K. Naylor *et al.*).

Orkney Queenamidda, Rendall, Mainland, first-winter, 19th September, trapped, photo (J. B. Ribbands).

Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, 23rd June (J. L. Irvine, B. Marshall). Maywick, Mainland, 5th September, photo (H. R. Harrop, P. V. Harvey).

Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 11th–12th September, photo (M. Michelin, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

Muness, Unst, first-winter, 19th–20th September, photo (S. Hawkins, B. H. Thomason).

Scalloway, Mainland, first-winter, 19th September, photo (M. S. Chapman, R. W. Tait).

Lund, Unst, 23rd September (M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

Ellister, Mainland, first-winter, 24th–25th September, photo (H. R. Harrop *et al.*).

Loch of Voe, Mainland, first-winter, 30th September to 5th October, photo (J. Gilroy, P. S. Woollen *et al.*).

Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 1st–3rd October, photo (P. V. Harvey, B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

(Breeds locally N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland & NE China. Winters throughout SE Asia to Java, Philippines & Sulawesi.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 126, 4) About 4–5 per year, influx 2003 (28); increasing

Kent Ramsgate, 29th December into 2014, sound recording, photo (P. Beraet, N. L. Jarman *et al.*).
Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point NNR, 27th November to 4th December, sound recording, photo (R. Doan, K. M. Wilson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 26).

Norfolk Holkham Meals, 27th November (A. I. Bloomfield).

Northamptonshire Kelmarsh Hall, 6th–22nd December, photo (M. R. Alibone, N. McMahon *et al.*).

2012 Dorset Dorchester, 1st November (P. Harris).

(Breeds Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan & Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas & mountains of NW China. Winters S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds C China from Hebei to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 110, 11) About three per year; stable or increasing

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, 13th–29th October, photo (S. Clifton, R. Stephenson, R. C. Taylor *et al.*).

Kent Bockhill, St Margaret's at Cliffe, 26th August, photo (B. A. Ryan *et al.*).

Norfolk Happisburgh, 25th August, photo (R. Moores *et al.*). Blakeney Point, 6th September (J. R. McCallum, A. Tegala). Holkham Meals, 24th October, photo (R. Millington *et al.*).

Orkney Burray, 23rd September to 17th October, photo (B. Hamill *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Ramsey Island, 8th–10th September, photo (G. Morgan *et al.*).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, first-winter, 8th–19th September, trapped, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*) (plate 308). Marrister, Whalsay, first-winter, 29th September to 18th October, photo (B. Marshall *et al.*).

Sussex Church Norton, 22nd–24th April, photo (O. Mitchell, E. M. & P. J. Raynor *et al.*).

Yorkshire Flamborough, 7th–9th October, photo (R. Baines *et al.*).

(Breeds SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, & locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal & S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

Western Bonelli's/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0, 75, 1)

Norfolk Hunstanton, 1st–3rd October, photo (A. J. Bull *et al.*).



Roger Riddington

308. Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli*, Virkie, Mainland, Shetland, September 2013.

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 30, 5) Rare, about one per year; recent increase

Carmarthenshire Pwll, Llanelli, male in song, 17th April to 8th July, sound recording, photo (I. K. Morgan, B. Stewart *et al.*).

Cornwall Kynance, male in song, 20th April, sound recording, photo (A. Blunden, J. Foster, M. Grantham).

Co. Durham Boldon Flats, male in song, 24th April, sound recording, photo (A. Kinghorn *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Old Town, St Mary's, male in song, 24th–27th April, photo (E. A. Fisher *et al.* per Isles of Scilly Recorder).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 25th–30th April (G. Chapman, M. Garner *et al.*).

(Breeds locally French Pyrenees & S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco & N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis* (0, 2, 1) Very rare, two other records in 1955, 2012

Pembrokeshire St Brides, first-winter, 10th November to 5th December, photo (R. C. Brown, P. & R. Royle, M. Young-Powell *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plates 27, 309).

This, the seventh Orphean Warbler for Britain, is only the third individual to be positively identified as a Western Orphean, and at the same time is the first for Wales. Following hot on the heels of the much-twitched individual in Cleveland (a first-summer at Hartlepool Headland on 29th May 2012), the Pembrokeshire bird inevitably drew somewhat less of a crowd, but was still deservedly popular during its 15-day stay. Although not trapped, it posed well for its admirers and the series of good photographs that duly emerged ably documented every pertinent detail of its plumage. The separation of Western and Eastern Orphean Warbler was discussed in *Birding*

World 25: 241–250 and *Brit. Birds* 106: 610–612; the importance of their differing tail patterns was highlighted by Svensson (2012), and it was good to be able to practise field identification on another vagrant.

A few birders may still harbour hopes that the male Orphean Warbler on Scilly in October 1981 might yet retrospectively be turned into an Eastern Orphean Warbler *S. crassirostris*, but it remains the case that there is no clear evidence that Eastern has occurred in Britain. As it turns out, this newly split species is eminently identifiable in the field, and birders



Gary Thoburn

309. First-winter Western Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis*, St Brides, Pembrokeshire, November 2013.

should be on the lookout for a cold-looking, scimitar-billed bird with clean underparts, dark chevrons on the vent and a bold wedge of white adorning the distal corners of the spread tail. That said, an Orphean Warbler of any sort is still a truly immense find – and any birder finding themselves faced with one should not shy away from sharing their luck straightaway, safe in the knowledge that a specific identification will be secured just as soon as the photographers gather the evidence.

(Breeds N Africa from Morocco to NW Libya, N through Iberian Peninsula to S France, S Switzerland & Italy. Winters sub-Saharan Africa from S Mauritania & N Senegal to Chad.)

Western Orphean/Eastern Orphean Warbler *Sylvia hortensis/crassirostris* (0, 4, 0) Not yet determined

1991 Cornwall Saltash, male in song, 20th–22nd May (*Brit. Birds* 87: 556).

1982 North-east Scotland Seaton Park, Aberdeen, 10th October, trapped (*Brit. Birds* 77: 552).

1981 Isles of Scilly Kitty Down, St Mary's, male, 16th–22nd October, photo (*Brit. Birds* 75: 522).

1967 Cornwall Porthgwarra, 22nd October, trapped (*Brit. Birds* 61: 351).

Now that Western and Eastern Orphean Warblers are treated as different species, these four records are classified as 'either/or'.

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Mallorcan, Corsican, Sardinian & north mainland Italian race, 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. moltonii* (1, 2, 0) Extremely rare, two modern records both in 2009

2009 Shetland Scatness, Mainland, male, 22nd–28th May, photo (R. M. Fray *et al.*). Skaw, Unst, male in song, 1st–10th June, sound recording, photo (R. J. Brookes, M. G. Pennington *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 102: plate 231; 107: plate 310).

The existence of a distinctive population of Subalpine Warblers on Mallorca, Sardinia and Corsica was recognised as long ago as 1937 (Orlando 1937) but this race effectively disappeared from the literature until it was resurrected by Shirihai *et al.* (2001). Festari *et al.* (2002) then showed that *moltonii* is also the form that breeds in northern mainland Italy.

The possible occurrence of *moltonii* in Britain was highlighted in the 2003 BBRC report (Rogers *et al.* 2004), but Svensson (2013) showed that this race had, in fact, occurred more than a century earlier! The first British record of any Subalpine Warbler, on St Kilda, Outer Hebrides, on 13th June 1894 (and previously accepted as a 'Western Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. cantillans*), had actually been *S. c. moltonii*. This race has now been added to the British List by BOURC (BOU 2014).



Rob Brookes

310. Male 'Moltoni's Subalpine Warbler' *Sylvia cantillans moltonii*, Skaw, Unst, Shetland, June 2009.

The records here therefore represent the first of the ‘modern’ era for this race. Though spring male *moltonii* possesses a unique set of plumage characters (including pale salmon-pink underparts and soft blue-grey upperparts) and further tail pattern and moult clues in the hand, firm identification of this race in the field will most easily be clinched by vocalisations. The call is very different from that of the other races, being a soft, rolling Wren-like ‘trrrrr’. Both birds accepted here were first suspected of being *moltonii* on the basis of these vocalisations, described in the case of the first individual and sound-recorded in the case of the second. Although there is a possibility that both records relate to the same individual, plumage differences suggested that two birds were involved.

Brambilla *et al.* (2008) demonstrated the true distinctiveness of *moltonii*, proposing full species status for this form. Svensson endorsed this work, and proposed a three-way split of the Subalpine Warblers (including ‘Moltoni’s Subalpine Warbler’), which is now under consideration by BOURC.

Although by far the rarest of the three proposed Subalpine Warbler species in Britain, the true status of *moltonii* here is yet to be fully understood. It has presumably been overlooked in the 115-year period between Britain’s first and the two subsequent records and, given the added attraction of it being a potential new species, it will perhaps not be too much longer before the next one is discovered. The chances of one appearing on the British mainland in the near future look reasonably high, in which case a significant ‘twitch’ will be on the cards.

(Race *moltonii* breeds Mallorca, Corsica, Sardinia & Ligurian Apennines, Italy. Wintering area unknown.)

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (0, 77, 1) About 2–3 per year; stable or decreasing

Borders St Abbs Head NNR, adult male, 30th June, trapped, photo (A. J. Kerr); presumed same 25th September to 2nd October, photo (R. Murray *et al.*).

It may seem surprising that we can link two sightings some three months apart, but the autumn sightings involved a bird sporting a ring so it seems highly likely this was the individual trapped and ringed at the site in June.

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa & Iberia to S France, N Italy & E to W Turkey & Israel. Some winter N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania & S Libya.)

Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 50, 1) About 1–2 per year; increasing

Shetland Bruray, Out Skerries, juvenile, 23rd September, photo (M. J. McKee) (plate 311).

(Breeds Siberia from Irtysh River E to Yakutia & Sea of Okhotsk, & SW Siberia & NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland & N & NE China. Winters Sri Lanka & NE India to S China, & S throughout SE Asia.)



Michael McKee

311. Pallas’s Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola*, Out Skerries, Shetland, September 2013.

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 133, 4) About four per year; increasing

Fair Isle Da Water, juvenile, 25th September, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (K. Britten, C. Gooddie, G. Hogan *et al.*). Shirva, juvenile, 28th September, photo (C. Gooddie, G. Hogan *et al.*). Wirvie Burn, juvenile, 6th October, photo (G. K. Gordon, D. Parnaby *et al.*). Shirva, 20th October, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

(Singing males regular SE Finland. To E, discontinuously from C Urals E to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido & NE China. Winters Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India to SE Asia & Philippines.)

Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella naevia*

Eastern races, 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler' *L. n. straminea/mongolica* (0, 1, 0) Extremely rare, one record in 2012

2012 Fair Isle Observatory, juvenile, 20th September, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (W. T. S. Miles, J. Moss, D. Parnaby, B. Rosser *et al.*) (plate 312).

This is the first British record of 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler'. Although there have been a number of suspected cases in the past, in this instance the additional supporting evidence provided by DNA analysis was crucial in establishing the identity of this cryptic taxon. Eastern birds share some plumage characters with Lanceolated Warbler *L. lanceolata* but in practice remain virtually indistinguishable from western populations (*L. n. naevia/obscurior*) based upon current knowledge of field characters (Harvey & Small 2007). There are, however, consistent differences in size, with *straminea/mongolica* being significantly smaller than *naevia/obscurior*, while the former typically has a more rounded wing shape (Svensson 1992; Kennerley & Pearson 2010). However, not all individuals are identifiable, because of a significant degree of overlap in measurements (Harvey & Small 2007).

Martin Collinson and his colleagues at the University of Aberdeen amplified and sequenced two mitochondrial genes (COI and ND2). Although there has been little work on the genetic relationships among Grasshopper Warbler populations (with the true relationships among taxa poorly understood), all the evidence pointed towards an eastern origin, which is consistent with the morphological features of the Fair Isle bird.

We are now entering a completely new age in birding, where technology is greatly enhancing our ability to identify cryptic taxa. The impact of digital photography has been rapid and striking but, increasingly, the analysis of DNA is revealing not only more about avian taxonomy but also

more about the identity of vagrant birds. Some field observers are uncomfortable with a reliance on scientists but to put it bluntly these methods are here to stay – and it is surely best to keep abreast of developments in this field and to embrace the opportunities presented. If molecular ecologists can work together with field birders, some of whom have an exceptional ability to detect subtle interspecific differences in morphology,



312. 'Eastern Grasshopper Warbler' *Locustella naevia straminea/mongolica*, Fair Isle, September 2012.

Will Miles

structure, behaviour and voice, then maybe we can develop novel criteria for field recognition.

(Races *straminea/mongolica* breed Russia from Ural Mountains E to Novosibirsk region of Siberia, NW Xinjiang province, China, and NW Mongolia, S to Tien Shan Mountains in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 42, 2) About 1–2 per year; stable

Fair Isle Schoolton, 5th–6th June, photo (W. T. S. Miles, T. Murphy, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Orkney Westness, North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 23rd September, trapped, photo (S. J. Davies, M. Warren *et al.*).

(Breeds C & E Europe from Germany to C Finland & Croatia, E through Ukraine & C Russia to W Siberia. Migrates through Middle East & NE Africa to winter E Africa.)

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (–, 612, 7) About eight per year, breeding; recent decrease, now stable

Devon Mansands, male in song, 30th May (M. Langman, J. D. P. Marshall *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Coombe Hill Meadows NNR, male in song, 19th April, sound recording (A. Jayne *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven, male in song, 15th–16th May (B. S. Duffin, R. K. Levett).

Suffolk Minsmere, male in song, 12th May to 9th June, sound recording (M. Fairley, J. Rankin *et al.*). Lakenheath Fen, male in song, 25th May to 7th June, sound recording, photo (P. J. Dolton, M. S. Rayment, R. L. Smith *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 255). Hares Creek, Shotley, adult, 11th June, trapped, photo (J. A. Glazebrook).

Sussex Pett Level, male in song, 18th June (I. Hunter).

2011 Essex Canvey Wick, male in song, 21st–22nd April, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 105: 600).

2009 Essex Seventy Acres Lake, Cheshunt GP, male in song, 30th April to 2nd June, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 104: 601–602).

(Nominate race breeds Iberia N to S Scandinavia, & E through E Europe, Russia & Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & winters W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Eastern race *fusca* breeds C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia, & winters NE Africa.)

Thick-billed Warbler *Iduna aedon* (0, 4, 1) Very rare, last in 2001, 2003

Shetland Geosetter, Mainland, 4th–5th October, photo (D. Fairhurst, H. R. Harrop *et al.*) (plate 313).

Once there was a whole suite of ‘Shetland specialities’, many of them regarded as birds that you had to visit Fair Isle to see. Nowadays most of these Holy Grail species, such as Lanceolated

Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* or Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, have been found on mainland Britain, while Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* is even on the cusp of removal from the BBRC list. Thick-billed Warbler, however, is still very much a Shetland speciality, with all five British records from the Shetland archipelago, the first four being on Fair Isle, 6th October 1955; Whalsay, 23rd September 1971 (released in Lerwick on 24th and found dead there on 25th); Out Skerries, 14th September 2001; and Fair Isle, 16th–17th May 2003. Just three others have been seen in Europe – in Finland on 11th October 1994 and two in Norway, both on Utsira, on 6th October 2004 and 3rd October 2005.



313. Thick-billed Warbler *Iduna aedon*, Geosetter, Mainland, Shetland, October 2013.

Michael McKee

Formerly treated as an *Acrocephalus* warbler, leading to thoughts that Great Reed Warbler *A. arundinaceus* may be the main confusion species, it is now in the genus *Iduna* along with some former *Hippolais*, but is such an oddity that it may be better placed in its own genus as *Phragmasticola aedon* (Arbabi *et al.* 2014). In the field it is an odd-looking bird. Dave Fairhurst's first fleeting glimpses of the bird at Geosetter in 2013 brought to mind a skulking shrike as much as any warbler. The bird spent most of its time lurking in an oat crop, giving just brief glimpses to the crowds that assembled (Harrop & Fairhurst 2014).

(Breeds S Siberia from Ob basin & N Mongolia to Ussuriland & NE China. Winters Nepal E through NE India to Indochina & C Thailand.)

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata* (1, 133, 11) About 4–5 per year; stable

Devon Millcombe Valley, Lundy, first-winter, 1st October, trapped, photo (J. Haddaway, J. Horton).

Fair Isle Chalet then Observatory, 22nd–28th August, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, 24th August, photo (R. F. Porter *et al.*). Burnham Overy Dunes, 26th August, photo (A. J. Griffiths *et al.*).

Northumberland Druridge Bay CP, 23rd–24th August, photo (D. Elliot, I. Fisher *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Ramsey Island, first-winter, 23rd September, photo (G. & L. Morgan *et al.*). Skokholm, first-winter, 25th September, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (R. Brown, S. Westerberg *et al.*).

Shetland Symbister, Whalsay, first-winter, 28th–29th August, photo (B. Marshall, C. Simpson *et al.*). Bruray, Out Skerries, first-winter, 26th–27th September, photo (A. Hayden, M. J. McKee, L. Pyke).

Sussex Climping, first-winter, 27th August, photo (R. Grimmett, O. Mitchell *et al.*). Seaford Head, first-winter, 30th September, photo (M. R. Eade, K. Gillam, R. C. Self *et al.*).

(Breeds E Finland, E to C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama* (0, 16, 1) Rare, about one every two years

Fair Isle Lower Stoneybrek and Stackhoull, 26th–30th September, photo (W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 415; 107: plate 314).

(Breeds S Kazakhstan to W Xinjiang province, NW China, S locally to Persian Gulf states, Iran, Afghanistan & N Pakistan. Winters N & W India, occasionally S to N Sri Lanka.)



Steve Arlow

314. Sykes's Warbler *Iduna rama*, Fair Isle, September 2013.

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* (0, 18, 1) *Rare, about one every 1–2 years*

Shetland Hoswick, Mainland, 5th–11th October, photo (J. G. Brown, P. M. Ellis *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

(Race *elaiea* breeds Balkans & Greece E to Turkey, S Caucasus, S Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Iran & N Afghanistan. Migrates through Middle East to winter E Africa. Other races breed North Africa, some wintering to S of breeding range.)

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 88, 8) *About three per year; increasing*

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, 7th June, photo (P. R. Massey *et al.*).

Fair Isle Charlie's Trees, 16th June, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). Barkland, first-winter, 22nd October, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (G. K. Gordon, A. & L. Leitch *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Higher Town, St Agnes, first-winter, 30th October, photo (P. A. Dukes *et al.*).

Kent Shorne Marshes RSPB, 31st May, trapped, photo (A. R. B. Harris, R. Kiddie).

Orkney Linklet, North Ronaldsay, male in song, 20th–24th May, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Muddisdale, Kirkwall, Mainland, 21st October (J. B. Bell, S. Pinder *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 12th October, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

2012 North-east Scotland Ladymire, Ythan Estuary, adult, 8th September, trapped, photo (P. D. Bloor, J. & R. Duncan *et al.*).

2012 Sussex Pagham Harbour RSPB, adult, 30th January to 13th March, photo, note revised dates, *Brit. Birds* 106: 616–617.

(Breeds Black Sea coast from N Bulgaria & Danube Delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 140, 19) *About five per year, all modern records since 1979; significant increase*

Devon St John's Valley, Lundy, first-winter, 3rd October, trapped, photo (J. Haddaway, J. Horton).

Fair Isle Observatory, male in song, 27th May to 2nd June, trapped, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Gully, first-winter, 7th September, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (D. McGibbon, D. Parnaby *et al.*). Springfield, first-winter, 11th October, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Schoolton, first-winter, 12th–15th October, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Northumberland The Snook, Holy Island, first-winter, 28th September (M. Carr).

Orkney Hestily, South Ronaldsay, first-winter, 26th September, trapped, photo (S. Groundwater, A. Mitchell). Twingness, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 15th–16th October, trapped, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skokholm, first-winter, 27th September, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (R. Brown, S. Westerberg *et al.*).

Shetland Everland, Fetlar, 29th May, photo (A. Cook *et al.* per Shetland Recorder). Ham, Foula,

first-winter, 4th–27th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton, P. R. French *et al.*). Quendale, Main-

land, first-winter, 20th September, photo (C. Barton, P. S. Crockett, J. R. W. Gordon *et al.*).

Scatness, Mainland, first-winter, 21st–24th September, photo (P. V. Harvey, S. J. Minton).

Norwick, Unst, first-winter, 22nd–23rd September, photo (D. Watson *et al.*). Funzie, Fetlar, first-

winter, 26th September to 1st October, photo (M. Kerby, D. Watson *et al.*). Burrafirth, Unst, first-

winter, 26th September, photo (M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Northdale then Norwick,

Unst, first-winter, 28th September to 10th October, trapped, photo (M. A. Maher, M. G.

Pennington *et al.*). Sandwick, Mainland, first-winter, 29th September (P. M. Ellis). Sumburgh

Head, Mainland, first-winter, 11th October, photo (M. Garner, R. Petley *et al.*).

2012 Isles of Scilly Bryher, 12th October, photo (J. Higginson *et al.*). Garrison, St Mary's, 30th October to 2nd November, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

2012 Outer Hebrides Bornish, South Uist, first-winter, 26th September to 2nd October, photo (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

2012 Shetland North Collafirth, Northmavine, Mainland, first-winter, 29th September to 1st October (C. Barton, P-A. Crochet *et al.*).

As confidence has grown in the last decade and more and more observers gain the experience of an encounter with Blyth's Reed Warbler in the field, the number of records is increasing rapidly. There are no fewer than 20 birds accepted for 2012 and 19 for 2013. If this trend continues, the species will leave the fold of BBRC assessment in due course, something that would have seemed unthinkable 20 years ago. Greater observer skill and awareness is a major factor, but the increasing number of records can also be attributed to the species' range expansion. There is now a thriving population in both Estonia and Latvia, while the species also breeds in southern Sweden and probably eastern Poland. Although the majority of British Blyth's Reeds will continue to appear in autumn, small numbers of singing birds in late spring is an establishing pattern too.

A new and as yet unreported pitfall in identifying Blyth's Reed Warbler is the 'Caspian Reed Warbler' *A. scirpaceus fuscus* – a taxon now suspected as a vagrant to Britain on one or more occasions (based on DNA analysis, although these records are currently held by BBRC, pending assessment). In Shetland, observers very familiar with Blyth's Reed Warbler found little difference in colour tones between the field appearance of a Caspian Reed Warbler and Blyth's Reed Warbler (Riddington *et al.* 2013). So the autumn challenge of identifying plain *Acrocephalus* warblers hasn't necessarily become any easier but is certainly as interesting as ever!

(Breeds S Finland, Baltic countries & European Russia E through C Siberia to Lake Baikal & upper Lena River, & S through W Mongolia & NW China, Kazakhstan & Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka & E to NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (7, 251, 5) About five per year; stable

Kent Dover, male in song, 31st May, sound recording (P. Forest, M. McVail *et al.*).

Norfolk Overy Dunes, Holkham NNR, 31st May, photo (A. I. Bloomfield).

Northumberland Chevington Pool, male in song, 19th–21st May (D. T. Elliot, A. D. McLevy *et al.*).

Wiltshire Westdown, Salisbury Plain, adult, 13th September, trapped, photo (G. & P. Deacon *et al.*).

Worcestershire Church Farm Pools, Grimley, male in song, 14th May, sound recording, photo (E. Lea *et al.*).

2004 Essex Abberton Resr, male in song, 17th–31st May, note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 98: 676).

The clear spring bias and the high proportion of singing males are typical for this species. Some 55% of all British Great Reed Warblers have turned up during May and about 40% of spring birds have been logged as singing males. Autumn encounters are much harder to come by, and only 12% of all records are from the period August–November inclusive, which makes the adult in landlocked Wiltshire all the more noteworthy.

'Grrkkk-grrrkk-carra-carra-sweee-swee-swee...'

(Breeds throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden & S Finland, & E across S Russia, Turkey & Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race *zarudnyi* breeds from Volga to NW China & W Mongolia. Winters throughout C & S Africa.)

Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* (0, 2, 1) Very rare, two other records in 1985, 1996

Argyll Vaul, Tiree, juvenile, 21st–29th September, photo (J. Bowler, D. & E. Campbell, A. & V. Grant *et al.*) (plate 315).

A young bird in autumn is the obvious pattern for a transatlantic vagrant, so this individual fitted the bill perfectly, spending nine days in September feeding on cotoneaster berries in a Tiree garden. The first for Ireland, another first-year bird, which turned up in October 2009, also conformed to that expected pattern. The first two British records, however, are slightly more



315. Juvenile Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum*, Tieve, Argyll, September 2013.

intriguing. The first was a midsummer adult on Shetland (on the island of Noss, 25th–26th June 1985), initially regarded with some suspicion, while the second was the famous first-winter bird in Nottingham city centre, present from 20th February to 18th March 1996. There is always the possibility that there could be a repeat performance of the latter record and most birders encountering flocks of winter Waxwings *B. garrulus* know to make a quick check of the undertail-coverts.

The Cedar Waxwing is a common and widespread species in North America that has increased significantly over the last 40 years (84.2% increase over 40 years, equating to a 16.5% increase per decade; data from Breeding Bird Survey and/or Christmas Bird Counts, www.birdlife.org) so it seems there is a good chance that more British records will follow.

(Breeds Canada from coastal British Columbia E to Newfoundland and Nova Scotia, and in USA from SE Alaska and N California to N Alabama and N Georgia; winters throughout USA and S to Panama.)

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

North European race, 'Black-bellied Dipper' *C. c. cinclus* (–, [22], 3)

Not yet determined

Essex Liston Mill, 27th April, photo (D. K. Underwood *et al.*).

Norfolk Thetford, 6th November 2012 to 30th March, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 618–619.

Orkney Honeysgeo, South Ronaldsay, adult, 22nd October, photo (S. R. & S. Sankey, J. Stevenson *et al.*).

Shetland North Water, Unst, 11th–12th October, presumed same Hermaness, Unst, 2nd–4th November, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

2006 Fair Isle Observatory area, 26th–31st March, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

2005 Fair Isle Wirvie and other sites, 26th October to 5th November, photo (per Fair Isle Recorder).

2000 Fair Isle Gully, male, 30th October to 4th November, trapped, photo (D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

1998 Fair Isle Gilly Burn, Hjukni Geo and Gully, 7th–17th April (C. A. Holt *et al.*).

1983 Fair Isle Gully, adult, 30th March to 5th April, trapped, photo (N. J. Riddiford *et al.*).

1980 Lincolnshire Donna Nook, 21st–25th November (S. Lorand, C. Morrison).

1967 Lincolnshire Cleethorpes, 11th–13th April, trapped (R. Baumber, S. Lorand, K. Robinson *et al.*).
1951 Fair Isle Gully, 28th April to 6th May, trapped (K. Williamson *et al.*).

(Race *cinclus* breeds Scandinavia, Baltic countries & W Russia. Outside the breeding season, resident or dispersive to S & W of breeding range.)

White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma* (27, 49, 4) About 1–2 per year; increasing

Fair Isle Furze, first-winter, 25th September, photo (J. A. Beaumont, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

Highland Spinningdale, 31st January, photo (per K. Kilshaw) (plate 317).

Isles of Scilly Covean, St Agnes, 2nd–3rd October (R. Righelato, N. & P. Wright *et al.*). Parsonage, St Agnes, first-winter, 25th October to 1st November, photo (D. Bradshaw, M. F. Walford, S. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 471; 107: plate 316).

The record from Fair Isle is fairly typical, in terms of both timing and location. And, even though there are actually just two previous records from Scilly, that archipelago also seems a likely location for an October White's Thrush. The Committee was divided over whether one or two birds were involved on St Agnes in 2013 – some felt that the secretive nature of this species and the (relative) dearth of observers on Scilly nowadays could easily lead to one being overlooked for three weeks, although the majority verdict was for the sightings to enter the record books as two individuals.

Controversy in Scilly aside, the stand-out record of the 2013 quartet is undoubtedly the bird in Highland. Winter can be a good time for rare thrushes, and January is actually in the top three months for this species' occurrence in Britain (with September and October), although 13 of the 15 January records were before 1970. And, for the first time in BBRC's history, not only did we have to assess a record with no description and no corpse, but also a situation where not even the photographer had seen the bird! This particular White's Thrush just happened to sidle past a motion-activated hidden camera trap, strategically placed in the hope of recording a Scottish Wild Cat *Felis sylvestris*! Well done to the various people responsible for spotting, identifying and submitting information on this cryptic rarity: Ruiradh Campbell, Roy Dennis and Kerry Kilshaw.

The photographic evidence left no doubts about the identification or indeed the authenticity of the record. This image represents yet another step in the ever-changing field of rare bird assessment and its relationship with modern technology. It does raise the question of whether we shall see more records like this one: interest in birding and general wildlife is seemingly on the



Michael McKee

316. White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, St Agnes, Scilly, October 2013.



317. White's Thrush *Zoothera dauma*, caught on a camera trap, Spinningdale, Highland, January 2013.

passes from a breeding territory in Estonia to wintering grounds in Spain without being seen in some of the countries en route. As such tags get smaller and lighter, it is surely something we are likely to encounter again soon, be it on a vagrant Zino's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira* (Flood & Fisher 2013) or something even more unexpected.

(Race *aurea* breeds European Urals & E across Siberia from Yenisey River to Ussuriland, S to N Mongolia, extreme NE China, Korean Peninsula & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & S Japan to Indochina & C Thailand. Nominate race resident or altitudinal migrant in Himalayas, SW China & Taiwan.)

Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus* (0, 8, 1) Very rare, last in 2010 (two)

Cornwall Porthgwarra, first-winter, 29th October to 1st November, photo (K. Arber, P. Callaway et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 470; 107: 318).

(Breeds C & S Alaska, & E across boreal & temperate Canada, S through Rocky Mountains to N Mexico, & NE USA S through Appalachian Mountains. Winters S USA & Mexico, S to Guatemala & El Salvador.)



318. First-winter Hermit Thrush *Catharus guttatus*, Porthgwarra, Cornwall, October 2013.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 53, 3) About 1–2 per year, influx 1986 (12); stable or decreasing

Fair Isle Da Water, 11th October, photo (A. D. W. Tongue et al.).

Isles of Scilly Old Town Church, St Mary's, 7th–14th October, photo (R. J. Hewitt et al.).

Outer Hebrides Sgallairidh, Barra, 10th October, trapped, photo (M. Oksien et al.).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia, & E through Alaska & N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter N South America.)



Josh Jones

319. First-winter female Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus*, Margate, Kent, May 2013.

Dusky Thrush *Turdus eunomus* (1, 8, 2) Very rare, last in 1987, 2010

Devon Brixham, first-winter female, 26th October to 2nd November, photo (M. Twiggs *et al.*).

Kent Margate, first-winter female, 15th–18th May, photo (S. Tomlinson *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 256; 107: plate 319).

Two records in one year is unprecedented. The well-watched Kent bird was particularly welcome for any who have read the storyboard by the bowling green on Hartlepool Headland about the Dusky Thrush found there in 1959, or stared wistfully at the photos of the stunning adult male in Manchester in December 2010.

The finder of the Kent bird, Steve Tomlinson, took great care in checking his identification of a bird that had originally been poorly seen. There was much discussion about this individual since it was a particularly dull bird, with some reddish-brown flank feathering. Dusky and Naumann's Thrushes *T. naumanni* are known to hybridise, albeit rarely, and so before the Committee voted on the record, it was felt appropriate to research the subject further. A visit by a BBRC contingent to the British Museum at Tring found that the plumage of the Kent bird matched skins from the northwestern end of the species' breeding range and well away from any potential zone of hybridisation with Naumann's. We felt that it was important to be as robust as possible about this record, particularly as one of the older accepted British records of Dusky Thrush (in Shetland in November 1975) is considered by some to be a hybrid. However, after a very full investigation, the Kent bird was accepted unanimously as a first-winter female Dusky.

(Breeds N Siberia from Yenisey River E to Chukotka Mountains, & Anadyr region, S to S Kamchatka. Winters N & E China S to the Yangtze River, Korean Peninsula & Japan.)

Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* (2, 70, 2) About two per year; stable

North-east Scotland Banchory, first-winter male, showing some characters of Red-throated Thrush *T. ruficollis*, 25th–30th March, photo (A. & H. A. Addlesee, T. Gray *et al.*).

Shetland Sound, Lerwick, Mainland, first-winter female, 9th–11th November, photo (R. J. Nason *et al.*).

Following on from the comments about hybridisation (or, perhaps more correctly, individuals that show mixed characters) among Asian thrushes in relation to the Kent Dusky Thrush (above), an apparent Black-throated Thrush in North-east Scotland in 2013 with red in the tail (a feature of Red-throated Thrush) created much further head-scratching for the Committee: how should this individual and others like it be reported? This was a most instructive rarity and the



320. First-winter male Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis*, with some reddish in the tail that suggests an influence of Red-throated Thrush *T. ruficollis*, Banchory, North-east Scotland, March 2013.

issues are not dissimilar to those surrounding Pine Buntings *Emberiza leucocephalos* with small amounts of yellow in the plumage, suggesting some degree of hybridisation with Yellowhammer *E. citrinella*, a topic that was discussed at length in BBRC reports more than a decade ago. This seems likely to be a continuing theme to which we shall no doubt return in future reports.

(Breeds C & N Urals, E across W Siberia & E Kazakhstan to NW China. Winters Iraq to N India, E through Himalayan foothills to Bhutan.)

American Robin *Turdus migratorius* (0, 25, 2) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

Isles of Scilly Rowsfield, Tresco, first-winter, 29th October to 6th November, photo (S. Hepburn *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides South Locheynort, South Uist, first-winter male, 17th November to 16th December, photo (I. R. Thompson, E. & J. Twelves *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from tree line of Alaska & N Canada, S to S Mexico. Winters S Canada to S USA & C America, S to Guatemala.)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 194, 10) About five per year; stable

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, first-summer male in song, 19th–21st May, photo (M. Gee *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 257).

Dorset Portland BO, first-winter, 9th–11th October, trapped, photo (M. Cade, M. Lanaway *et al.*).

Fair Isle Pund, first-summer, 8th–10th May, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Utra, 29th May, photo

(W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Auld Haa, first-summer, 29th May, photo (P. V. Harvey *et al.*). North Haven,

Auld Haa and Schoolton, first-winter, 26th–30th August, photo (D. Parnaby, D. Shaw *et al.*).

Northumberland Chare Ends, Holy Island, first-winter, 7th September, photo (J. & T. Farooqi *et al.*).

Orkney Graemeshall, Holm, 26th August, trapped, photo (C. J. Corse, S. Groundwater, D. Wakefield).

Shetland Virkie, Mainland, 30th May (G. F. Bell, R. M. Fray, R. Riddington *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, male in song, 31st May to 6th June, photo (D. Baker, C. Bourne, A. A. Hutt *et al.*).

(Breeds C & E Europe from S Scandinavia & Baltic countries to Romania & Ukraine, & E through temperate Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* (0, 9, 1) Very rare, all but one since 1997
Fair Isle Upper Stoneybrek, first-winter male, 21st–23rd October, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*)
(plate 321).

(Breeds European foothills of Ural Mountains, & Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, & S to N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido & NE China, also isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma & N Indochina to C Thailand, S China & Taiwan.)

**Red-flanked Bluetail
Tarsiger cyanurus
(2, 113, 12)** About four
per year, influx 2010 (31);
recent increase

Fife Denburn Wood, Crail,
13th–14th October, photo (B. Far-
quharson *et al.*).

Norfolk Horsey Gap, female, 14th
April, photo (G. Clarke) (*Brit.
Birds* 106: plate 227). Weybourne
Camp, 13th October, trapped,
photo (R. Churchyard, M. P.
Taylor). Whimpwell Green,
Happisburgh, 13th–14th October,

photo (J. M. Bradley *et al.*) (plate 322). Warham Greens, 14th October (J. Archer, G. Spinks *et al.*).
Orkney Pierowall, Westray, first-winter, 18th–21st October, photo (D. & S. Otter, T. Sykes).
Twingness, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 31st October, trapped, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).
Shetland Housay, Out Skerries, male, 29th September, photo (A. Hayden, M. J. McKee, L. Pyke).
Voe, Mainland, 20th–21st October (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*). Walls, Mainland, first-winter,
25th–26th October, photo (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).
Suffolk Sizewell, 14th–17th October, photo (C. A. Holt *et al.*).
Yorkshire Spurn Point, first-winter female, 18th October, trapped, photo (M. Brew *et al.*).

(Breeds NE Finland E through boreal forests of N Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan & NE China. Winters
S China, Taiwan & S Japan through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand.)



David Parnaby

321. First-winter male Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*,
Fair Isle, October 2013.



Kevin Du Rose

322. Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus*, Happisburgh, Norfolk, October 2013.



323. Female Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis*, Fair Isle, June 2013.

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1, 36, 5) Rare, about one per year; stable or increasing

Fair Isle Lower Station, female, 9th June, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (R. Cope, W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby, R. Riddington *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 258; 107: plate 323).

Highland Raffin, Stoer, first-summer male, 12th June, photo (D. Hall, J. Pogson).

Northumberland Low Newton, first-summer male, 8th–9th May, photo (G. Woodburn *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 226).

Shetland Skaw, Whalsay, first-summer male, 10th–16th May, photo (B. Marshall *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, adult male, 18th May, photo (J. Grist *et al.*).

2008 Orkney Ystang Pund, North Ronaldsay, female, 24th May, photo (R. J. Butcher *et al.*).

(Breeds E France, S Germany, Italy & Baltic islands of Gotland & Öland, E through C & E Europe to European Russia W of Urals. Winters E & C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)

Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*

Central Asian races, 'Eastern Black Redstart' *P. o. phoenicuroides* / *rufiventris* / *xerophilus* (0, 4, 0) Very rare, first in 1981, last in 2011

2011 Kent Foreness Point, first-winter male, 11th–17th November, photo (B. Hunt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plate 35).

2011 Northumberland Holy Island, first-winter male, 16th–21st November, photo (A. D. Mould *et al.*) (plate 324).

2003 Norfolk Wells-next-the-Sea, first-winter male, 9th November (J. R. McCallum).

1981 Kent Dungeness BO, first-winter male, 7th–8th November, trapped, photo (B. Cox *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plates 262 & 263).

'Eastern Black Redstart' formed a part of the British List until 2002, based on four accepted records between 1975 and 1988. During a review, however, it became apparent that hybrids between Common *P. phoenicuroides* and Black Redstarts occur quite frequently in Europe where the species' ranges overlap, and these can resemble 'Eastern Black Redstarts' of the races *ochruros* / *phoenicuroides* / *semirufus*. Descriptions of the four accepted records at the time were insufficiently detailed to eliminate the hybrid possibility, leading to the removal of 'Eastern Black Redstart' from the British List (BOU 2002). Subsequently, Steijn (2005) discussed the identification of two birds, from the Netherlands and the Channel Islands, which duly became the first

accepted records of *P. o. phoenicuroides* from Europe (although other accepted records now pre-date these). Despite the plumage similarities between *P. o. phoenicuroides* and hybrids, Steijn found important differences in the wing formula. In particular the primary-tip spacing between P5, P6 and P7, and emarginations on P3–6 are diagnostic, and good photographs showing the position of the primary tips on the closed wing should rule out the hybrid option.

In November 2011, birders in Britain were treated to two exceptionally showy and long-staying 'Eastern Black Redstarts', in Northumberland and Kent. Faecal samples were obtained from both birds; that from the Northumberland bird did not yield a usable DNA sample but that from the Kent bird was assigned unequivocally to the 'eastern' group of subspecies (J. M. Collinson *in litt.*). This, and the excellent photographs of both birds established beyond doubt that birds of the Eastern subspecies group had reached Britain. BBRC then prepared some identification and assessment guidelines by which 'Eastern Black Redstarts' could be safely diagnosed in a British context, and the hybrid option ruled out. This led to a further review of pending records and the belated acceptance of birds in Norfolk from November 2003 and Kent in November 1981. The latter thus becomes the first British record thanks to some excellent photographs from Brian Cox (which were also runner-up in the Carl Zeiss Award in 2012; *Brit. Birds* 105: 474–478).

The four records accepted here have not been assigned to a particular subspecies. Instead they are treated as belonging to a group of races comprising *phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus*. Of these, the grey mantle of the British (and other European) birds is characteristic of *P. o. phoenicuroides*, which is a long-distance migrant, breeding in the mountains of central Asia and wintering from northeast Africa to India. Birds of the race *P. o. rufiventris* are darker, almost blackish above, and the chestnut on the underparts averages somewhat darker and richer, while *P. o. xerophilus* is an intermediate form, sharing characters of the other races. Although neither *rufiventris* nor *xerophilus* is a long-distance migrant, and therefore less likely to reach Britain than *phoenicuroides*, it was concluded that, based upon current knowledge, neither *xerophilus* nor *rufiventris* could be ruled out completely. As our understanding of the group continues to improve, this diagnosis may be refined at some future point.

(Race *phoenicuroides* breeds Russian Altai & N Mongolia, S through mountains of C Asia & NW China to NW Himalayas & W Tibet; intergrades with races *rufiventris* and *xerophilus* in mountains of W China and Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE Africa, Arabian Peninsula, Iran & Pakistan to W & C India.)



Frank Golding

324. First-winter male 'Eastern Black Redstart' *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides/rufiventris/xerophilus*, Holy Island, Northumberland, November 2011.



325. Female Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis*, Spurn, Yorkshire, April 2013.

Rock Thrush *Monticola saxatilis* (5, 21, 2) Rare, about one every 2–3 years

North-east Scotland Scotstown, St Fergus, Peterhead, female, 18th–22nd July, photo (M. B. Cowie *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, female, 25th–26th April, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 228; 107: plate 325).

Although one was briefly in Devon on 25th May 2004, it is a long time since the last twitchable birds. Hunstanton golf course in Norfolk was the venue for the last mainland bird, from 22nd–25th May 1995, while in 1996 one frequented Bryher from 28th September to 2nd October. Those who could not get to Spurn this year must have been extremely grateful for a second bite of the cherry so soon afterwards with the obliging bird at Scotstown.

The population declined sharply from the 1900s to the 1960s when it disappeared from many breeding areas in western Europe, including Germany, most of Austria and the French Jura. The decline became less marked during 1970–90 and numbers recovered slightly in Switzerland (Hagemeijer & Blair 1997). While the remaining breeding populations are now regarded as stable, Rock Thrush remains a major rarity in Britain: ten records in seven years during the 1980s now appears to have been a rather brief golden period.

(Breeds S Palearctic from Iberian Peninsula, N to S Alps & E through Mediterranean basin to mountains of C Asia, S Siberia, Mongolia, & Pamir Mountains to N Tibetan Plateau E to NE China. All populations migratory, wintering across N sub-Saharan Africa.)

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (1, 360, 9) About ten per year; decreasing

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-winter male, 24th–29th September, photo (E. J. & S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly St Wara's, St Agnes, first-winter male 'Caspian Stonechat' *S. m. variegatus*, 17th–26th November, photo (E. A. Fisher, D. Page *et al.*) (plate 327).

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point NNR, first-winter male, 5th–6th October, photo (T. A. Howes, K. M. Wilson *et al.*).

Norfolk Wells, first-winter female, 14th–15th October, photo (A. I. Bloomfield *et al.*).

Northumberland Howick, first-winter, 20th–22nd October, photo (D. Astins *et al.*).

Orkney The Loons, Stromness, Mainland, 4th October, photo (T. Wootton). Bay of Swartmill, Westray, 11th–16th November, photo (D. & S. Otter).

Suffolk Trimley Marshes, first-winter, 1st–8th October, photo (P. J. Holmes *et al.*).

Yorkshire Scalby Beck, first-winter male, 16th–23rd October, photo (S. Wignill *et al.*).

2012 Dorset Portland Bill, first-winter male 'Stejneger's Stonechat' *S. m. stejnegeri*, 24th–26th October, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (M. Cade, N. Urch *et al.*); note record now attributed to the race *stejnegeri* (*Brit. Birds* 106: 621–622; 107: plate 326).

With recent proposals for ‘Stejneger’s Stonechat’ *S. m. stejnegeri* to be accorded full species status, and for a change in the nomenclature of ‘Caspian Stonechat’ *S. m. variegatus/armenicus*, the status of Asian stonechats recorded as vagrants in northwest Europe is in considerable flux. A paper by Andy Stoddart on the BBRC website covers all of the core issues (www.bbrc.org.uk/waxwings-to-buntings). With new data on morphology, vocalisations and molecular



Martin Cade

326. First-winter male ‘Stejneger’s Stonechat’ *Saxicola maurus stejnegeri*, Portland, Dorset, October 2012.

data still emerging, there is potential for further taxonomic changes and advances in identification.

As a consequence of the various developments, Siberian Stonechat records are for the first time published here in a broad generic sense unless specifically identified to the lowest taxonomic level. Thus it is implied that each accepted Siberian Stonechat could be any one of *maurus*, *stejnegeri*, *variegatus* or *armenicus* unless otherwise indicated. This is because it is neither easy nor even always possible to separate examples of first-winter male and (particularly) female *maurus* and *stejnegeri* from Caspian Stonechats (*variegatus/armenicus*) in the field.

This report sees the publication of the first accepted record of Stejneger’s Stonechat, although in the process this has flushed out a number of old records that might involve this taxon, and which need to be reviewed. The Caspian Stonechat on Scilly in 2013 was the fourth for Britain, following singles in 1985, 1993 and 2006 (which are now incorporated in the 360 records from 1950 to 2012 – above). With an apparently genuine increase in Caspian Stonechats reaching northwest Europe in the last few years, both in spring and in autumn (so far only males have been identified, which means that females are presumably being overlooked), there are no fewer than six different taxa to think about if you come across an interesting stonechat!

(Race *maurus* breeds Russia & W Siberia E to Yenisey River and region of Irkutsk, NW Mongolia & N China, S to Tien Shan Mountains, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. Winters Iran to N India. Race *stejnegeri* breeds east of *maurus* to Pacific coast of Amurland, S to N Mongolia, NE China, Sakhalin, Hokkaido & N Honshu. Winters NE India & China S of Yangtze, S to Malay Peninsula, Taiwan, Philippines & Borneo. Race *variegatus* breeds W & N Caspian Sea from Azerbaijan & Georgia, to lower reaches of Volga & Ural Rivers. Migrates SW to winter E Iraq, Arabian Peninsula, & Israel to N & E Sudan, N Ethiopia & Eritrea.) Other races occur in Caucasus region, Himalayas & W China.)



Alastair Wilson

327. First-winter male ‘Caspian Stonechat’ *Saxicola maurus variegatus*, St Agnes, Scilly, November 2013.

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 30, 1) Rare, about one per year; stable

Pembrokeshire Martin's Haven, first-winter, 30th September to 10th October, photo (D. Astins *et al.*).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from E Greece N to Ukraine & SW Russia, & E from Turkey through Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, S to Iran & N Pakistan. Winters Africa from N Sahel zone to E Africa, & Middle East to S Iran, Pakistan & NW India.)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 123, 1) About four per year; increasing

Avon Severn Beach, first-winter male, 11th–14th December, photo (P. D. Bowerman *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Rattray Head, female, 2nd December 2012 to 26th March, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 622–623; 107: plate 179).

(Breeds desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, & C Asia from C Iran & N Pakistan to Mongolia & N China. Some N African birds resident, but most winter Sahara & Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia & Somalia. Asian breeders winter Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 65, 3) About two per year; stable

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male, 13th October, photo (C. Piner *et al.*).

Hampshire Monk Sherbourne, first-winter female, 7th–17th December, photo (P. Northcote).

Nottinghamshire Collingham Pits, first-winter female, 9th–10th November, photo (C. Cornish, N. C. Crouch, J. Ellis *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 28).

2003 Somerset Burnham-on-Sea, first-winter female, 30th November, photo (A. M. & B. E. Slade *et al.*).

(Breeds E Romania & Bulgaria, E though S & E Ukraine, S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters NE & E Africa, & SW Arabian Peninsula.)

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (0, 10, 0) Very rare, last in 2012 (two)

2012 Suffolk Landguard, male, 24th August to 14th September, photo; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 106: 623).

(Breeds Cape Verde, Canary Islands & NW Africa, N to Iberian Peninsula, Sardinia, Balkans E to SW Asia, E through C Asia to E Kazakhstan, NW China & S to Afghanistan. European breeders mainly resident, C Asian breeders migratory, wintering NE Africa, Arabian Peninsula & Iran to NW India.)

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

East Asian races, 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *M. f. simillima/plexal/tschutschensis/taivana/macronyx* (1, 2, 0) Not yet determined

2011 Shetland Bruray, Out Skerries, first-winter, 10th–14th October, sound recording, photo (M. J. McKee, C. Turner) (plate 328).

2010 Devon Colyton water treatment works, Colyford, first-winter male, 4th–19th December, sound recording, trapped, photo, DNA analysis (P. Abbott, C. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: 36–41, plate 42).

The race *M. f. simillima* was previously on the British List on the basis of specimen records from Fair Isle in October 1909 and September 1912. DNA from these specimens was analysed recently, however, with the latter bird proving to be 'western' in origin (Collinson *et al.* 2013). The 1909 bird was confirmed as an 'eastern', although it could not be assigned to a particular taxon. The subspecies *simillima* was therefore removed from the British List but the 1909 Fair Isle bird is recorded in the 8th BOU Checklist as belonging to 'one of the eastern subspecies, probably *plexa*, *tschutschensis* or *simillima*' (BOU 2013).

The occasional occurrence of 'grey-and-white' first-winter Yellow Wagtails, often in late autumn or even in winter, has been recognised for some years but although the working assumption has been that they are most likely to be 'eastern' in origin, this has been hard to prove. Now, thanks to further DNA analysis and also to the analysis of sound recordings, this hypothesis has received additional support.



Michael McKee

328. First-winter 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *Motacilla flava simillima/plexa/tschutschensis/taivana/macronyx*, Out Skerries, Shetland, October 2011.

The two birds accepted here were both exceptionally well documented. The Devon bird was trapped, photographed in the field and in the hand, sound-recorded and its DNA analysed (and in this case the DNA allowed *taivana/macronyx* to be eliminated), while the Shetland bird was well photographed and sound-recorded. Both birds looked and sounded 'as expected', i.e. showing a striking 'cold' grey-and-white appearance resembling Citrine Wagtail *M. citreola* and giving harsh or buzzing calls reminiscent of that species.

Despite the superficial resemblance, the elimination of Citrine Wagtail is generally straightforward by differences of the head pattern, but eliminating other Yellow Wagtail taxa may prove more difficult. For example, although a high proportion of eastern birds show a 'grey-and-white' plumage in their first autumn, there also appears to be an increasing cline of such plumage across *flavissima*, *flava*, *thunbergi* and *beema*, with as many as a third of the last race being 'grey and white' (Alström & Mild 2003).

There are also problems in interpreting calls. 'Grey-and-white' birds of the races listed above give the familiar soft 'western' call but greater problems may exist in eliminating 'grey-and-white' examples of the southern races *cinereocapilla*, *iberiae* and *feldegg*, which typically give harsh or buzzing calls. Furthermore, typically 'harsh-calling' eastern birds can also give softer calls, closer to those of western birds.

To compound the problems, intergrades between Yellow Wagtail forms and hybrids between Yellow and Citrine Wagtails are also well established.

Meanwhile, the taxonomy of Yellow Wagtails is far from settled. A significant genetic divide exists between western and eastern races (Alström & Mild 2003), implying a potential split into 'Western Yellow Wagtail' and 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail'. Within the latter group, Pavlova *et al.* (2003) proposed a 'northeast Asian' clade of Yellow Wagtails incorporating *plexa* and *tschutschensis* and a 'southeast Asian' clade incorporating *taivana* and *macronyx*. Within any of these groupings, however, there is little agreement over which races are valid and where their precise distributions lie. For example, some authors (notably Alström & Mild 2003) do not recognise *simillima*, treating it as a synonym of *tschutschensis*, while *plexa* (an 'eastern' form based on genetic analysis) appears indistinguishable in morphology from *thunbergi* (a 'western' form) and is similarly not universally recognised (Alström & Mild 2003).

Against this background, it is hardly surprising that attribution to a subspecies group is the best that can be managed for the birds accepted here. However, this conclusion does at least demonstrate the continuing occurrence in Britain of birds from east Asia. This is hardly a surprise, of course – the northeastern races in particular are common long-distance migrants

whose vagrancy to northwest Europe would be expected.

BBRC is keen to record birds of the eastern group but, given the obvious complexities involved, has little option but to adopt a cautious approach, accepting only birds which can be identified by a combination of plumage (ideally photographed) and either vocalisations or genetic evidence (or both).

Genetic analysis will enable the separation of the 'northeast Asian' and 'southeast Asian' groups but records confirmed by vocalisations will be published as 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' *M. flava simillima/plexa/tschutschensis/taivana/macronyx*. Further research may yield additional morphological features to separate non-adult individuals of the 'northeast Asian' and 'southeast Asian' groups but at present we are unable to differentiate individuals that have not yielded material for genetic analysis. However, there is no evidence as yet to support the occurrence of 'southeast Asian' birds in Britain.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

SE European/W Asian race, 'Black-headed Wagtail' *M. f. feldegg* (0, 17, 1)

Rare, about one every 1–2 years

Pembrokeshire Marloes Mere, male, 12th–13th May, photo (B. Anderson *et al.*).

(Race *feldegg* breeds Balkans & Greece E through Turkey to E Kazakhstan & Afghanistan, S to Iran. Western populations winter Nigeria to Uganda & S to Congo, eastern populations winter NW India.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 282, 21) *About nine per year; significant increase*

Cornwall Marazion Marsh RSPB, first-winter, 23rd–26th August, photo (C. & D. K. Lamsdell, D. K. Parker *et al.*). Windmill Farm, first-winter, 4th–8th September, photo (C. & P. Brewster *et al.*). Marazion Marsh RSPB, first-winter, 10th–16th September, photo (A. D. Mills *et al.*).

Denbighshire/Caernarfonshire Conwy RSPB, first-winter, 22nd August, photo (R. Hughes *et al.*). Fair Isle Landberg, Da Water and other sites, first-winter, 12th–19th August, another first-winter 16th–19th August, one or other remaining to 21st August, photo (G. K. Gordon, D. Hennessy, D. Parnaby, J. Wood *et al.*). Easter Lothar Water, first-winter, 31st August to 3rd September, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Great Pool, Tresco, first-winter, 26th August to 1st September, photo (J. Higginson *et al.*).

Norfolk Kelling Water Meadows, then Cley, female/first-summer, 25th April (M. A. Golley, M. Nash, N. R. Rogers). Kelling then Weybourne Camp, first-winter, 28th August, photo (M. Nash, M. P. Taylor *et al.*).

Northumberland Inner Farne, Farne Islands, first-winter, 23rd August, photo (D. Steel *et al.*). Brownsman, Farne Islands, first-winter, 27th–28th August, photo (C. R. Hatsell, D. Steel *et al.*).

Orkney Dennis Ness, North Ronaldsay, first-winter, 26th August to 2nd September, photo (S. J. Davies, P. Stronach, M. Warren *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Aird an Rùnair, North Uist, female, 22nd May (S. E. Duffield *et al.*). Hirta, St Kilda, first-winter, 5th–9th September, photo (P. Forrest, M. J. McKee, C. J. Turner).

Shetland Pool of Virkie, Mainland, first-winter, 29th August to 5th September, photo, trapped, DNA analysis (R. M. Fray, R. Riddington *et al.*). Loch of Melby, Mainland, first-winter, 31st August to 3rd September, photo (R. M. Tallack). Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 8th–9th September, photo (M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Ham, Foula, first-winter, 20th–24th September, photo (W. C. Aspin, D. & G. Atherton *et al.*). Fleck, Mainland, first-winter, 17th–19th October, photo (C. C. Rodger *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, male, 30th April (S. Exley, A. A. Hutt).

2012 Orkney St Margaret's Hope, South Ronaldsay, first-winter, 8th September (J. Branscombe, B. Hamill, P. Higson).

In the 2012 report we noted the exceptional numbers of Citrine Wagtails in Britain in recent years – and 2013 was no exception. It was yet another bumper year – equalling the record 21 in

2008. The Dutch rarities committee reports a similar increase in the Netherlands since 2006.

At the BBRC AGM, an annual agenda item is the consideration of which species should be removed from (or indeed be readmitted to) the BBRC list (see www.bbrc.org.uk/about/constitution/4-bbrc-taxa) – and Citrine Wagtail crops up regularly. Will 2014 be its final year as a national rarity? An exceptional spring for this species has not done its chances of retaining its status any favours. The identification of Citrine Wagtail is not always straightforward, however, and even some photographed birds have caused controversy in the autumn. In last year's report (*Brit. Birds* 106: 624–625), the fact that hybridisation can be a problem was highlighted and in 2011 there was a mixed breeding pair (male Citrine with a female Yellow Wagtail *M. f. flava*) in the Netherlands (Draaijer & Slaterus 2011). Three chicks fledged from that pair but they were elusive and no good photographs were taken. Mixed pairs have also occurred in Norway, Sweden, Finland and France in recent years.

(Breeds Baltic countries, S Finland, Belarus, Ukraine & S Russia, E across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula & S to C Siberia; also C & E Turkey E to Kazakhstan, Mongolia & N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds C Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (4, 93, 3) About three per year; stable or increasing

Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, 28th September to 2nd October, photo (P-A. Crochet *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 416). Islesburgh, Mainland, 3rd–4th October, photo (R. Addison, J. Bird, J. Gilroy). Toab, Mainland, 10th–12th October, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*) (plate 329).

(Breeds scrub-tundra & taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia E to Chukotskiy Peninsula & Kamchatka. Migrates through E China & Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo & N Sulawesi. Isolated race, *menzbieri*, breeds NE China & Amur River region of SE Russia.)



Roger Riddington

329. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, Toab, Mainland, Shetland, October 2013.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (1, 38, 3) About 1–2 per year; recent increase

Berkshire Queen Mother Resr, two, December 2012 to 26th January, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 106: 627–628.

Cheshire & Wirral Burton Marsh, 20th December into 2014, photo (E. Williams *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 107: plate 64).

Shetland Heddicliff, Foula, 5th–27th October, photo (K. Gibb, M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*). Mid Yell, Yell, 6th October, photo (D. Preston).

2012 Outer Hebrides Rubha Ardvule, South Uist, 19th September, photo (A. Stevenson *et al.*).

2012 Shetland South Ness, Foula, 28th October, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*).

(North American race *rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonica* breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)



330. First-winter male Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator*, North Collafirth, Mainland, Shetland, February 2013.

Pine Grosbeak *Pinicola enucleator* (4, 8, 0) Very rare, last in 2004, 2012

Shetland North Collafirth, Mainland, first-winter male, 29th January to 23rd February, photo (R. J. Nason, B. & H. Ratter, P. Sclater *et al.*); presumed same as Shetland 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 630–631, plates 117, 372; 107: plate 330).

(Resident or dispersive across N Scandinavia, E to E Siberia & Kamchatka, & S to Hokkaido, Japan. Widespread across much of N North America, E to Newfoundland & S through mountains to C California & N New Mexico.)

Arctic Redpoll *Acanthis hornemanni*

Greenland race, 'Hornemann's Redpoll' *A. h. hornemanni* (12, 106, 11)

About four per year, influxes 2012 (30), 2009 (22); recent increase

Fair Isle Chapel and other sites, 25th–28th September, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Orkney Sangar, North Ronaldsay, male in song, 4th–7th May, photo (M. Warren *et al.*). Gerbo, North Ronaldsay, 15th October (M. Warren).

Outer Hebrides Eoropie, Ness, Lewis, 10th October, photo (J. Gray); presumed same Port of Ness, Lewis, 13th October, photo (R. L. K. Jolliffe, B. A. E. Marr, R. G. Newell).

Shetland Hoswick, Mainland, 21st–24th September, photo (J. G. Brown, G. A. Tyler *et al.* per Shetland Recorder). Funzie, Fetlar, adult, 24th September, photo (A. Cook, M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason); presumed same Valyie, Norwick, 26th September, photo (D. Preston *et al.*). Leagarth, Houbie, Fetlar, 24th September (A. Cook, M. A. Maher, B. H. Thomason). Fladdabister, Mainland, 26th September, photo (G. W. Petrie *et al.*). Ham, Foula, 27th–29th September, photo (W. C. Aspin, D. & G. Atherton, P. R. French). Norby, Mainland, 11th October, photo (R. Riddington, R. M. Tallack). Mid Yell, Yell, 13th–14th October, photo (D. Preston *et al.*).

(Race *hornemanni* breeds Ellesmere & Baffin Island, Canada, & N Greenland S to Scorsby Sound. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (73, 181, 101) About eight per year, influxes 2013 (101), 2008 (59); stable

At Sea Sea area Fair Isle, c. 70 km W of Shetland, on SSCV Thialf, juvenile, 24th–31st July, with second juvenile on 27th July only, photo (D. Andrews per Shetland Recorder) (plate 331).

Fair Isle Hoini, eight (two adult males, adult female, five juveniles), from 26th July, the group decreasing to four by 4th August, photo (S. J. Davies, R. D. Hughes, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Bunes,

juvenile, 4th August, photo (D. & S. Parnaby).

Gloucestershire Woorgreens, at least 17 (12 males, five females), 9th November into 2014, photo (V. Bennett, G. Black, D. Owen, L. Thomson *et al.*).

Hampshire Furzy Lawn, New Forest, first-winter female, 30th November to 1st December (M. Ward *et al.*).

Highland Glenborrodale, male, 6th September, photo (T. Mabbett, J. Willsher).

Kent Hemsted Forest, adult male, 13th October into 2014, photo (S. J. Broyd *et al.*).

Lancashire & North Merseyside Crow Wood Farm, Browsholme Hall, juvenile, 2nd–6th August, photo (G. Thomas, B. Tyrer *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 327).

Norfolk Cley next the Sea, immature male, 20th July, photo (D. Rutherford *et al.* per Norfolk Recorder). Gramborough Hill, Salhouse, juvenile/first-winter, 20th July, photo (J. E. D. Furse). Holme, two (male, immature/female), 20th July (K. Nixon, C. Rand). Lynford Arboretum, three 21st July, then four (one female, three juveniles) 22nd July, decreasing to one by 2nd September, photo (P. M. Wilson *et al.*). Kelling Heath, juvenile, 22nd–27th July, photo (M. Nash, N. R. Rogers, J. Wagstaff). Holkham, 25th July (A. I. Bloomfield). Weybourne Heath, at least six, 22nd–23rd August (J. R. McCallum, K. B. Shepherd). Lynford Arboretum, 13th September to 9th November, peak of five (two males, female, two juveniles) on 20th September, photo (A. Banwell *et al.*).

Orkney Millcroft, Eday, adult male, 28th–30th June, photo (J. Campbell, M. King). Stromness, Mainland, two (male, juvenile), 28th July to 2nd August, photo (J. Ashburn, A. Forsyth, A. Knight *et al.*). Twingness, North Ronaldsay, juvenile female, 19th August, trapped, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

Shetland Trondra, first-summer male, 23rd July, photo (C. & S. Hudson per Shetland Recorder). Wester Quarff, Mainland, first-summer female, 23rd July, photo (R. Haywood *et al.* per R. M. Tallack); presumed same as one of Tresta, Mainland, four (two first-winter females, two juveniles), 27th July to 5th August, photo (R. M. Tallack *et al.*). Baltasound, Unst, at least four (two juveniles, two females), 26th July to 5th August, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Isle of Noss, immature female, 26th–28th July, photo (S. Adlard, K. Snell *et al.*). Garths Ness, Mainland, male, 28th July, photo (R. M. Mellor *et al.*). Hametoun, Foula, three (adult, two juveniles), 29th July to



David Andrews

331. Juvenile Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera*, aboard SSCV (semi-submersible crane vessel) Thialf – the largest crane vessel in the world – in sea area Fair Isle, July 2013.

1st August, two remaining to 3rd August, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*). Sumburgh Head, Mainland, juvenile, 29th–31st July, photo (N. Harper *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 326). Sandwick, Mainland, juvenile, 30th July to 4th August, photo (J. G. Brown per Shetland Recorder). Loch of Voe, Mainland, five juveniles, 30th July, then seven juveniles, 31st July to 6th August, photo (M. S. Chapman, B. Gray *et al.*). Hamar, Unst, two (immature male, immature female), 6th August (P. V. Harvey). Burrafirth, Norwick and Skaw, Unst, juvenile, 20th–25th September, photo (R. Foyster, R. M. R. James *et al.*).

Shropshire Wyre Forest, three (two males, female), 28th November into 2014, photo (B. Westwood per Shropshire Recorder).

Suffolk Havergate Island, two juveniles, 20th July, photo (D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

Surrey Mid Holmwood, Dorking, female, 31st July (M. Gray), presumed same, Leith Hill, 8th October into 2014, photo (S. Bayley *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, juvenile, 20th July, photo (D. & M. Blackmore). Broomhead Resr, at least 11 (two adult males, three adult females, six juveniles), 12th August into 2014, photo (A. Deighton, J. Hewitt, A. J. Hill, G. J. Speight, R. Twigg *et al.*).

It is only five years since the last major influx of this species, but the 2008 record of 59 individuals has now been trounced, with about 101 individuals in 2013. (Note that, with long-staying groups at large sites, such as in Norfolk and Yorkshire, and particularly in cases where birds moulted into a subsequent plumage type, it proved very difficult to judge numbers with certainty.) Unlike the 2008 influx, when only three birds were seen away from the Northern Isles, birds were much more widespread in 2013.

An unusually early bird was seen in Orkney on 28th–30th June (there have been only three other June arrivals: Orkney in 1894, Fair Isle in 1908 and Norfolk in 1980). There were no others until July, with the next arrivals, rather surprisingly, in England: two in Suffolk and one in Yorkshire on 20th July and ten in Norfolk during 20th–25th, whereas in the Northern Isles, birds began to arrive from 26th. A long-staying inland female in Surrey from 31st July was also noteworthy. In August, most arrivals were in the Northern Isles, although there was a bird in Lancashire early in the month, 11 inland in Yorkshire mid-month and six new birds in Norfolk in late August. The only new arrivals in September were singles in Highland and Shetland, and five more new birds in Norfolk. At the end of the year birds filtered south and west and appeared at new sites: one in Kent in October, a flock of 17 in Gloucestershire in November (in British terms bettered only by a flock of 18 in Shetland in 2008), and one in Hampshire in November/December.

Identification continues to raise interesting questions. While most observers know to be cautious with juveniles – since Common Crossbills *L. curvirostra* with prominent wing-bars do occur, and juvenile Two-barred may be quite subtle – most problems in 2013 involved males. There were a few orange-toned individuals, lacking the distinctive raspberry hues of a typical male, while some of the males were rather tatty, with narrow wing-bars and very worn tertials that lacked white tips. There were various controversial birds that caused much debate, notably in Norfolk, while a striking wing-barred male Common Crossbill was seen in Highland early in 2013 (Martin 2013). It has been suggested that wing-barred Common Crossbills (so-called ‘*rubifasciata*’) may result from hybridisation between the two species (Roselaar 2014).

Good views of the tertials as well as the wing-bars is necessary for identification, and establishing the age and degree of wear of feathers may be necessary for some birds. Hearing the diagnostic trumpeting excitement call is a useful bonus.

(Palearctic race *bifasciata* breeds larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Scandinavia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk & S to Baikal region. Outside breeding season occasionally disperses as far as NW Europe. N nominate race *leucoptera* breeds across N North America.)

Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea* (0, 1, 1) *Extremely rare, one other record in 1996*
Anglesey Llandsadwrn, Menai Bridge, male, 20th May, photo (S. & T. Booth) (plate 332).

Much scientific research has been carried out into the physiology of birds on migration and on their abilities to navigate and the Indigo Bunting has been one of the key species used in these

investigations. However, none of that research explains how this male appeared for an hour one evening on a bird table on Anglesey. With no evidence of it having been in captivity or of ship assistance, how it arrived will remain pure speculation.

In his paper on North American landbirds in Britain, Bond (2014) rated its vagrancy potential as high. Yet, although there had been previous records (Fair Isle in August 1964 and Essex in September 1973), Indigo Bunting was not accepted onto Category A of the (then) British and Irish List until an immature appeared on Cape Clear, Co. Cork, on 9th–19th October 1985. Subsequent claims (for example Norfolk in October 1988 and Yorkshire in May 1989) were also considered to be escapes before another young bird was found on Ramsey Island, Pembrokeshire, on 18th–26th October 1996. The Anglesey bird thus becomes the first accepted spring record.

Some have commented on the colour of the Anglesey bird, suggesting that it was either the wrong shade or too dull. However, the blue of an Indigo Bunting is structural in nature rather than the result of pigmentation. Our perception of the colour relies on the refraction of light through the feather structure, which causes the perceived colour to vary greatly – as anyone who has watched one hop from shade into sunlight can testify. Indigo Bunting was formerly consigned to Category E because the moult pattern of earlier individuals did not conform to what was expected. Yet we now know that the moult sequence of Indigo Buntings is complex, and that individuals of the same age and sex can look considerably different. As our knowledge of this species increases and its pattern of occurrence becomes clearer, we might yet find that some previous records may have been consigned to Category E rather too hastily.

(Breeds Canada, from S Manitoba E to S Ontario and SW Quebec, and throughout E USA from South Dakota S to Gulf Coast and N Florida; winters C Mexico to C Panama, also Cuba and Bahamas.)

(Breeds Canada, from S Manitoba E to S Ontario and SW Quebec, and throughout E USA from South Dakota S to Gulf Coast and N Florida; winters C Mexico to C Panama, also Cuba and Bahamas.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (2, 42, 2) Rare, about one per year; increasing

Lincolnshire Spalding, 28th May, photo (S. Bulbeck, S. Lyon *et al.*).

Somerset Churchstanton, 23rd January to 3rd March, photo (R. Jones, M. Reynolds, D. Stannard *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (8, 228, 1) About 4–5 per year; recent decrease

Northumberland Brownsman, Farne Islands, juvenile, 5th–7th September, photo (A. Denton, B. Outram *et al.*).

(Breeds widely across Russia & Siberia E to Kamchatka, S to NE China & NE Hokkaido. Winters E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, & widely throughout SE Asia.)

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (7, 200, 3) About five per year; stable or decreasing

Dumfries & Galloway Mainsriddle, male, 22nd June, photo (J. & L. Wood).



Terry Booth

332. Male Indigo Bunting *Passerina cyanea*, Llandsadwrn, Menai Bridge, Anglesey, May 2013.

Isle of Wight Compton Bay, male, 10th–11th June, photo (K. Pellow *et al.*).

Northumberland Brownsman, Farne Islands, female, 30th May to 2nd June, photo (A. Denton, G. Duncan, D. Steel *et al.*).

(Breeds C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq, W Iran, & N through Caucasus to Ukraine & S Russia. Winters W & C India.)

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (1, 23, 1) Rare, about one every three years

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-winter, 19th–23rd September, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 417).

(Breeds S Canada from C Alberta E to C Nova Scotia, S throughout E USA from N Texas to W South Carolina. Migrates to winter from S Mexico to Colombia & Venezuela.)

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (0, 5, 1) Very rare, first in 1973, last in 2011

Orkney Holland, Papa Westray, 6th October, photo (S. Davies *et al.*) (plate 333).

This curious, bespectacled, pipit-like warbler is still a prize find: despite this being the second record in three years, it is only the sixth British record. This one-day bird was the third for Scotland (following sightings in Shetland and the Outer Hebrides in 1973 and 2011 respectively); all three have turned up in October. Those in Devon in 1985 and Scilly in 2004 also arrived during the month of October, but the one that wintered in Herefordshire from December 2001 until February 2002 bucked the trend. Interestingly, the two Irish records of Ovenbird fall either side of this expected window; one was seen in late September and the other was found dead in early December (the latter reinforcing the belief that late-arriving Nearctic passerines may attempt to winter in northwest Europe — as of course will the odd Oriental vagrant). In contrast to the population declines shown by some other North American passerine species, the Ovenbird has increased in numbers in many states over recent decades, so it could be a bird we see more of on this side of the Atlantic. And after ten years without a twitchable Ovenbird, the next long-stayer will undoubtedly prove particularly popular.

(Breeds Canada from SE British Columbia E to Newfoundland & S throughout C & E USA to N Alabama & South Carolina. Winters from Florida & N Mexico S to Panama & West Indies.)



Sean Davies

333. Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*, Holland, Papa Westray, Orkney, October 2013.

Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina* (0, 1, 1) Extremely rare, one other record in 1977

Shetland Baltasound, Unst, first-winter female, 23rd October to 2nd November, photo (R. Foyster, M. G. & M. J. Pennington, B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 472; 107: plates 40, 334).

Cape May Warbler spent almost 40 years as one of the most highly desired and outrageous records on the British List. A singing male in a park near Paisley (Clyde) remained the only record for the Western Palearctic until the appearance of the bird on Unst reported here. The fact that it performed so well during its 11-day sojourn in Baltasound, coupled with the fact that it involved the longest British twitch that many birders have ever undertaken, helped to place this delightful sprite firmly at the top of the ‘bird of the year’ tree for many people.



Rebecca Nason

334. First-winter female Cape May Warbler *Setophaga tigrina*, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, October 2013.

Named after the famous New Jersey migration hotspot, where the first specimen was collected in 1811, the Cape May Warbler breeds in a rather narrow band of boreal forest in North America, and migrates south to winter in the Caribbean islands and coastlines of Central and South America. Its migration is largely elliptical, with the southbound leg passing through the Great Lakes region and following an easterly route. It is, however, less numerous at coastal migration monitoring sites, such as Cape May, New Jersey, than other more regular transatlantic vagrants such as Blackpoll *S. striata* and Black-and-white Warblers *Mniotilta varia*, but figures are broadly comparable with those of Red-eyed Vireo, our most frequently occurring Nearctic passerine (data from 'Morning Flight' counts at Cape May). Clearly, there is more to predicting vagrancy than simply looking at the numbers.

(Breeds Canada from E British Columbia and N Alberta, E to Nova Scotia, and N USA from North Dakota to NE New York and S Maine; winters W Indies.)

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata* (0, 17, 1) Rare, about one every three years

Devon Lundy, 28th October, photo (C. Baillie, T. J. Davis, T. A. Jones).

This bird was found by Tim Jones and Tim Davis at the very end of a ten-day stay on the island – just 50 minutes before the helicopter left. In fact, only one of the other two birders on the island managed to see the bird, although it was calling and feeding quite happily in the sheltered valley at Millcombe.

This is still the second-commonest of the North American wood-warblers (after Blackpoll Warbler, which has been recorded 43 times). As we now know, it turned out to be the first of three in seven months, but this was the first to be seen in Britain since 2003, although there were five in Ireland during that period. It was also the first in the southwest since one in Scilly in October 1995, and the first in Devon since the previous Lundy bird, in November 1960, the second for Britain. Fourteen of the 18 records have been in autumn, between 4th October and 5th November. The first for Britain was found in January 1955, in Devon, and there have been three in spring, on Fair Isle in 1977 and 1999 and the Calf of Man in 1985.

(Nominate race breeds North America from Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, S to Michigan & Massachusetts, USA. Migrates E of Rocky Mountains to winter throughout C America & Caribbean. Another race breeds SW Canada & W USA.)

Appendix I. Records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2013

Brent Goose *Branta bernicla*

North American & East Siberian race, 'Black Brant' *B. b. nigricans* (0, 196, –)

[statistics to end of June 2005]

2005 Essex Northey Island, River Blackwater, 18th December 2004 to 19th March; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 98: 631–633).

2004 Essex Heybridge GP and Osea Island, 18th January to 13th February (D. Rhymes), presumed same Northey Island, 27th–31st March, note revised details (*Brit. Birds* 98: 631–633).

2002 Essex Old Hall Marshes, 2nd December 2001 to 19th March; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 96: 554–555).

2001 Essex Brightlingsea, 14th January to 25th February, presumed same Old Hall Marshes, 23rd January to 7th March, and Foulness, 3rd–18th February; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 95: 483–484).

1997 Essex North and South Woodham Ferrers, 6th December 1996 to 7th March; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 90: 461; 91: 464).

(Race *nigricans* breeds Arctic NE Siberia W to Lena Delta, where overlaps with nominate race. Majority breed Arctic Alaska & E to Victoria Island, Canada. Migratory, wintering on Pacific coast of North America, S to Baja California. Formerly, large numbers wintered coastal N China, Korean Peninsula & Japan, but now rare.)

American Wigeon *Anas americana* (19, 341, –) [statistics to end of 2001]

1975 Greater London Surrey Docks, two (male, female), 5th–9th September, photo; previously accepted but now considered to be escapes following a review (*Brit. Birds* 69: 330–331).

1973 Greater London Surrey Docks, male, 29th August, photo; previously accepted but now considered an escape following a review (*Brit. Birds* 67: 316).

(Breeds C Alaska E across cool temperate Canada to Hudson Bay & Quebec, & S into NW & Midwest USA. Migrates throughout USA & C America to Colombia.)

Ferruginous Duck *Aythya nyroca* (0, 218, –) [statistics to end of 2005]

2001 Essex Netherhall GP, 6th–17th October; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 95: 487–488).

2000 Essex Seventy Acres Pit, Cheshunt, 28th October 1999 to 1st January; previously accepted but now considered an escape, note also revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 93: 523; 95: 487–488). Abberton Resr, 17th–19th October; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 94: 464).

(Breeds Poland & Hungary E through Ukraine to Caspian Sea, but distribution patchy. Elsewhere breeds S Spain, Kazakhstan, W Mongolia & Tibetan Plateau. Migratory, most winter E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas, NE Africa & Indian subcontinent.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (340, 363, –) [statistics to end of 2012]

2012 Cambridgeshire Ouse Fen RSPB, immature, 13th and 25th October (R. Grimmett, G. Hiron), presumed same as Ouse Washes RSPB, Cambridgeshire 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

2012 Dorset Stanpit Marsh, 24th–27th January (A. Hayden *et al.*).

2012 East Glamorgan Sully Moors and Cosmeston CP, 16th–17th January, photo (R. Francis *et al.*). Cosmeston CP and Flat Holm, 6th February, photo (J. D. Wilson, S. Whitfield). Llancadle, River Kenson, 22nd–24th February, photo (S. P. Hinton *et al.*).

2012 Essex East Mersea and Fingringhoe Wick, two, 12th October 2011 to 1st February, photo (M. Cock, S. Cox *et al.*).

2012 Isle of Wight Brading Marshes RSPB, 29th January to 4th February, photo (D. B. Hale *et al.*). Sandown Levels then Brading Marshes, two, 15th March, photo (K. Ballard, D. Dana), presumed same as Surrey 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

2012 Norfolk Berney Marshes RSPB and nearby sites, five, 23rd–27th February, four, 28th February to 27th March, note revised numbers (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

2012 North-east Scotland Donmouth, three adults (one ringed), 29th April (D. Heptinstall *et al.*),

presumed same Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, 2nd May, photo (RSPB reserve staff), Newburgh and Drums, 5th May, photo (C. Gibbins, H. Maggs per North-east Scotland Recorder); presumed same as Cumbria 2012 (*Brit. Birds* 106: 582–586).

2012 Yorkshire Staveley, 3rd February, photo (M. Metcalfe).

2011 Norfolk Bintree Mill, juvenile (ringed), 19th October (S. McCann).

(Breeds S France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Migratory, most wintering E Africa, but W European population winters Morocco & Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean to N South America.)

White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* (68, 797, –) [statistics to end of 2005]

1978 Essex Abberton Resr, 4th–9th August; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 72: 528).

(Breeds Poland to Hungary, with sporadic breeding to W. Breeds commonly from Belarus, W Russia & Ukraine E to S Siberia, N Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Russian Far East & NE China, but absent from large areas. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & N Australia.)

Caspian Gull *Larus cachinnans* (0, 88, –) [statistics to end of 1999]

1993 Dorset Radipole Lake RSPB, first-winter, 20th December 1992 to 3rd January, photo (B. Spencer *et al.*).

Our knowledge of the identification of this species has moved on greatly since the first admitted onto the British List (from Mucking, Essex, in 1995). This made it a relatively simple matter to accept this bird as the ‘new’ first for Britain based on the photographic evidence, which showed all the key features for identification as a first-winter Caspian Gull.

(Breeds E Germany & Poland to Black Sea, E across steppes to SE Kazakhstan. Winters to S of breeding range, mainly from E Mediterranean to Persian Gulf, with small numbers regular NW Europe.)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus* (78, 702, –) [statistics to end of 2005]

1990 Essex Hadleigh Downs, female, 2nd August; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 84: 467).

1987 Essex Abberton Resr, female, 23rd July to 12th August; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 81: 551–552).

1974 Essex Ingatestone, male, 1st July; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 68: 315).

(Breeds forested steppe of E Europe from E Hungary to temperate Russia, E to Baikal region. Migratory, wintering SW Africa.)

Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica* (3, 513, –) [statistics to end of 2005]

1994 Essex Barling, 23rd May to 3rd June; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 88: 527–528).

1980 Essex Abberton Resr, 6th–12th May; note revised dates (*Brit. Birds* 74: 480–481; 76: 505).

(Widespread & locally common NE Africa, Iberian Peninsula, Balkans & Greece but uncommon C Mediterranean to S France. To E, breeds discontinuously W & S Turkey & Middle East. Wintering area of European population unknown but assumed to lie in N equatorial Africa. Other races, including nominate *daurica*, breed E Asia from S Siberia to S China & Japan, Indian subcontinent & locally equatorial Africa.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 429, –) [statistics to end of 2012]

2012 Co. Durham Whitburn CP, 28th September (D. M. Foster *et al.*).

2012 Shetland South Harrier, Foula, 24th September, photo (W. C. Aspin, G. C. Taylor *et al.*); note revised observers (*Brit. Birds* 106: 625–627). Virkie, Mainland, 24th October (P. V. Harvey, D. Pointon, R. M. Tallack *et al.*).

2009 Northumberland Beacon Point, Newbiggin, 7th October (A. S. Jack); previously not proven but now accepted after additional information submitted (*Brit. Birds* 103: 637–638).

1994 Essex Wat Tyler CP, 13th January to 2nd April; note revised location (*Brit. Birds* 88: 529; 92: 586–587).

(Race *yunnanensis* breeds N Urals E across C & E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & throughout N & C SE Asia. Nominate race breeds Himalayas & mountains of WC China, wintering throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Appendix 2. Records where identification accepted, but placed in Category D (see *Ibis* 136: 253).

Falcated Duck *Anas falcata*

2003 Kent West Hythe and Lympe, male, 15th April to 14th June, photo (I. A. Roberts *et al.*).

(Breeds E Siberia from Yenisey River & Baikal region E to Sea of Okhotsk & S to NE China & Hokkaido, Japan. Winters from S Japan to SE China, locally W to Nepal.)

Appendix 3. Records where identification accepted, but origin is uncertain.

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Sussex Upper Beeding and Adur Valley, adult, 13th December 2012 to 25th January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 106: 639), presumed same Pulborough Brooks RSPB, 8th September, photo (J. Sellwood *et al.*).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

White-tailed Tropicbird *Phaethon lepturus*

Cumbria Mawbray Bank, adult, 6th January, found dead, museum specimen, photo (S. M. Hewitt, P. Scott) (*Brit. Birds* 106: plate 55).

Having accepted the identification, and since there was at least a possibility of genuine vagrancy, this record was passed to BOURC to consider as a potential addition to the British List. BOURC ultimately concluded that there was no evidence that this bird had been alive in Britain or in British waters (BOU in prep.).

(Breeds Bermuda, Bahamas, Caribbean, tropical Atlantic islands from Ascension to Gulf of Guinea; also tropical Indian and Pacific Oceans. Resident, or dispersive in non-breeding season but distribution at sea poorly known.)

Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*

2010 Essex Tilbury Docks, 19th July, found dead, photo (J. P. Wright) (see *Brit. Birds* 107: 118–119, plate 66).

(Breeds temperate Canada from E British Columbia E to New Brunswick, S to S USA; winters from S USA to S Mexico.)

Desert Finch *Rhodospiza obsoleta*

2001 Kent Dungeness, 30th–31st October, photo (J. Bartlett, D. Walker, N. Wall *et al.*).

This record was reviewed by BOURC; the bird was considered an escape and the record is placed in Category E.

(Breeds S Turkey to Israel, E through C Asia & Iran to NW China. Mostly resident.)

House Finch *Haemorhous mexicanus*

2010 Cornwall Land's End, first-summer male, 4th–12th May, photo (M. T. Elliott *et al.*), presumed same between Lizard and Lizard Point, 16th May, photo (E. Reast); also seen Devon.

2010 Devon East Prawle, first-summer male, 27th June to 22nd October, photo (P. M. Mayer *et al.*); also seen Cornwall.

BOURC's conclusions about this bird were published in *BB* earlier this year (*Brit. Birds* 107: 460–466).

(Resident or dispersive in SW Canada & throughout USA S to S Mexico. Introduced E USA where now abundant and spreading W.)

Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata*

Hampshire Southampton Docks, first-winter male, 14th November, found dead, museum specimen, photo (A. R. Collins, M. Smith).

(Nominate race breeds North America from Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, S to Michigan & Massachusetts, USA. Migrates E of Rocky Mountains to winter throughout C America & Caribbean. Another race breeds SW Canada & W USA.)

Appendix 4. List of records not accepted

2013 **Blue-winged Teal** Morfa Madryn Wells, Caernarfonshire, three, 12th August. **Black Scoter** *Melanitta americana* Off Titchwell, Norfolk, 18th July. **Black-browed Albatross** *Thalassarche melanophris* Hopton, Norfolk, 27th October. **Albatross** *Thalassarche* sp. Baggy Point, Devon, 4th November. **Ascension Frigatebird** Rhunahaorine Point, Argyll, 9th July. **Black Stork** Between Monksilver and Woodford, Somerset, 4th May. **Pulborough Brooks RSPB**, Sussex, 6th June. **Northern Harrier** Deerness and Tankerness, Orkney, 2nd–11th February. **Pallid Harrier** Beddmanarch Bay, Anglesey, 1st May. Fair Isle, 3rd June. **Booted Eagle** *Aquila pennata* Muckton, Lincolnshire, 16th August. Bracklesham, Sussex, 9th August. **Little Bustard** *Tetrax tetrax* Haltwhistle, Northumberland, 1st August. **Black-winged Stilt** Tobermory, Mull, Argyll, 1st July. **Upland Sandpiper** *Bartramia longicauda* Fair Isle, 25th September. **Brünnich's Guillemot** Off Iona, Argyll, 5th May. **Bridled Tern** Flamborough Head, Yorkshire, 10th July. **Gull-billed Tern** Telscombe, Sussex, 3rd October. **Franklin's Gull** *Larus pipixcan* Freiston Shore RSPB, Lincolnshire, 25th August. **Great Black-headed Gull** *Larus ichthyaetus* Titchwell Marsh RSPB, Norfolk, 27th June. **Snowy Owl** Glas Bheinn, Jura, Argyll, 28th March. **European Roller** Fair Isle, 11th June. **Lesser Kestrel** Burnaston Meadows, Derbyshire, 9th April. **Gyr Falcon** Evie, Mainland, Orkney, 2nd November. **Lesser Grey Shrike** Skomer, Pembrokeshire, 15th July. **Western Bonelli's Warbler** Pont-rhyd-y-groes, Ceredigion, 29th April. **Iberian Chiffchaff** Rhôs-on-Sea, Denbighshire, 20th May. **Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler** Gugh, Isles of Scilly, 16th October. **Savi's Warbler** Old Moor RSPB, Yorkshire, 17th June. **Booted Warbler** Bruray, Out Skerries, Shetland, 28th August. **Blyth's Reed Warbler** Red Rocks, Hoylake, Cheshire & Wirral, 29th September to 4th October. **Black-bellied Dipper** Baron's Haugh RSPB, Clyde, 28th September to 2nd October. **Thrush Nightingale** Blakeney Point, Norfolk, 18th May. **Red-flanked Bluetail** Burnham Overy Staithe, Norfolk, 7th April. **Siberian Stonechat** Hightown, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 7th–9th November. Weybourne Camp, Norfolk, 15th March. **Black-headed Wagtail** Winwick, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 29th May. **Citrine Wagtail** South Huish Marsh, Devon, 12th August. Abbotsbury, Dorset, 29th August. Burnham Overy, Norfolk, 28th August. St David's, Pembrokeshire, two, 3rd September. **Hornemann's Redpoll** Loch Gruinart RSPB, Islay, Argyll, 19th April. The Loons and Loch of Banks RSPB, Mainland, Orkney, 16th October. **Two-barred Crossbill** Kinsey Wood, Shropshire, 29th December. **White-throated Sparrow** Bilston Cemetery, West Midlands, two, 4th January. **Black-headed Bunting** Llandeilo Graban, Radnorshire, 25th May. **Black-and-white Warbler** *Mniotilta varia* Funzie, Fetlar, Shetland, 6th September.

2012 **Canada Goose (North American race)** Mill of Strachan, Banchory, North-east Scotland, 29th October to 6th November. **Blue-winged Teal** Loch Stiapavat, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 13th–19th January. **Pallid Harrier** Belvide Resr, Staffordshire, 14th April. **American Coot** *Fulica americana* Eilean nan Ramh, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 26th November. **Black-winged Stilt** Newport, Isle of Wight, 6th April. Cottam, Nottinghamshire, two, 18th September. **Lesser Yellowlegs** Northwick Warth, Avon, 16th October. Penryn, Cornwall, 28th August. Flamborough, Yorkshire, 1st September. **Great Snipe** Cuidhir, Barra, Outer Hebrides, 12th October. **Whiskered Tern** Holme, Norfolk, 29th September. **Bonaparte's Gull** Hinkley Point, Somerset, 19th January. **Eurasian Scops Owl** *Otus scops* Cotswold Water Park, Wiltshire, 24th April. **Gyr Falcon** St Ives, Cornwall, 14th May. **Iberian Chiffchaff** Apuldram, Sussex, 17th April to 21st June. **Rüppell's Warbler** *Sylvia rueppelli* Cholsey, Oxfordshire, 19th May. **Black-bellied Dipper** Wolfscote Dale, Derbyshire, 23rd November. **Rock Thrush** Between Levant and Botallack, Cornwall, 13th–14th March. **Olive-backed Pipit** Happisburgh, Norfolk, 22nd October. **Hornemann's Redpoll** Balranald, North Uist, Outer Hebrides, 7th October. **Two-barred Crossbill** Lynford Arboretum, Norfolk, 4th February. **Common Yellowthroat** *Geothlypis trichas* Holy Island, Northumberland, 6th November.

2011 **Northern Eider** *S. m. borealis* Dornoch, Highland, four, 13th January. **Pallid Harrier** St Abbs Head NNR, Borders, 26th October. **Baird's Sandpiper** West Burra, Shetland, 30th August. **Semipalmated Sandpiper** Patrington Haven, Yorkshire, 12th September. **Whiskered Tern** Rainham Marshes RSPB, Essex/Greater London, 26th August. **American Herring Gull** *Larus smithsonianus* Hoylake, Cheshire & Wirral, 8th–21st February. Seaforth, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 20th–22nd February. **Red-flanked Bluetail** Whitburn CP, Co. Durham, 13th October. **Eastern Yellow Wagtail** Housay, Out Skerries, Shetland, 25th September. **Citrine Wagtail** Seaforth, Lancashire & North Merseyside, 26th August.

2010 Northern Eider Embo and Dornoch, Highland, 9th November 2009 to 16th January. Iberian Chiffchaff Inchnadamph, Highland, 19th May. Citrine Wagtail Northrepps, Norfolk, 26th September.

2009 Northern Eider Fort Island, Isle of Man, 12th December. Brünnich's Guillemot Cley, Norfolk, 4th December. Veery *Catharus fuscescens* Off Tiree, Argyll, 15th October. 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' Titchwell Marsh RSPB, Norfolk, 17th–22nd October.

2008 Northern Eider Foula, Shetland, 21st–30th September. Western Bonelli's Warbler Cot Valley, Cornwall, 31st October.

2007 Northern Eider Fair Isle, 22nd September 2006 to 25th February. Scoughall, Lothian, 18th February to 29th April. Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* Scoulton, Warham and East Barsham, Norfolk, 28th April. Brünnich's Guillemot Cley, Norfolk, 12th November.

2005 Northern Eider Uigen, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, two, 20th April to 8th May. Steppe Buzzard *B. b. vulpinus* Burghclere, Hampshire, 5th June. 'Eastern Yellow Wagtail' Lundy, Devon, 30th August.

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An analysis of biometrics, vocalisations and DNA of two Swinhoe’s Storm-petrels trapped on Fair Isle in 2013

Two Swinhoe’s Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* were caught during routine storm-petrel ringing sessions on Fair Isle in summer 2013 (see Miles 2013 and pp. 590–591). These individuals are the latest in a series of extralimital records of this species in the Atlantic, dating back to 1983 and summarised in Flood & Fisher (2011). The only known breeding sites of Swinhoe’s Storm-petrels are around the Sea of Japan and the Yellow Sea, while the only known wintering area is the northern Indian Ocean (Brooke 2004; Howell 2012), yet there has long been speculation about an undiscovered Atlantic breeding population. In this note we present an analysis of the biometrics, vocalisations and DNA of the two Fair Isle birds.

Full biometrics for each bird were taken when first trapped (table 1). Comparison with published data suggested that bird 1 (NB84930) cannot be sexed on wing length but that bird 2 (NB84938) was a female (male 146–157 mm, female 150–165 mm; Snow & Perrins 1998). Brood-patch scores suggested that bird 1 was not breeding (the patch was completely feathered and skin not vascularised) while the breeding status of bird 2 was ambiguous (the patch was nearly completely bare but the skin not vascularised).

The chatter call of bird 2 was recorded in the hand on 17th August. The resulting sonogram suggests that it was a male, in contrast to the evidence from biometrics. In fig. 1, each note is ill-defined and lacks clear harmonics (the appearance of each note is longitudinally fuzzy with no clear horizontal

separation within the structure). These features are characteristic of the chatter calls of males but not females, and represent harsh and rather scratchy sounds compared with the clearer, purer-sounding notes of female calls (Taoka *et al.* 1989; Robb *et al.* 2008).

Feathers dislodged from each individual in the bird bag were collected and genetic analyses carried out by JMC, along with analyses on a feather from a single Leach’s Storm-petrel *O. leucorhoa* trapped on Fair Isle in 2013. Molecular genotyping using techniques described in Bantock *et al.* (2008) confirmed that both Swinhoe’s were males, whereas the Leach’s was a female.

To determine the genetic affinity of the Fair Isle Swinhoe’s Storm-petrels, both to each other and to other individuals of this species previously trapped in the North Atlantic, sequence data were obtained. Isolation and sequence of the mitochondrial cytochrome oxidase (*COI*) gene showed that the first Fair Isle bird was genetically identical (over 685 bp) to a bird captured at Hernyken, Norway (64.2°N 11.9°E) by Tycho Anker-Nilssen on 13th August 2006 (accession number GU571508). This result does not automatically mean that these two birds were related, because such similarity could occur between unrelated individuals if there is little variation across the *COI* gene for this species as a whole. The second Fair Isle bird was 1 base pair different. Since mitochondrial DNA is inherited through the female line, this small difference in *COI* sequence suggests that the two Fair Isle birds did not have the

Table 1. Biometric measurements and brood-patch scores of two Swinhoe’s Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* trapped on Fair Isle in 2013. Biometrics are: wing length (max. chord), maximum tail length (outermost feather), minimum tail length (central feather), bill length (to feathering) and tarsus length; all measurements in mm. Brood patch was scored for feather coverage, scale from 0 (fully feathered) to 5 (entirely bare); and vascularisation, from 0 (skin as normal with no evidence of capillaries close to surface) to 2 (brood patch heavily vascularised with obvious capillary network at surface).

Ring number, date of first capture	Wing	Tail max.	Tail min.	Bill	Tarsus	BP
NB84930, 27th July	154	74	58	14.1	24.3	0/0
NB84938, 7th August	159	77	60	14.5	25.7	4/0

same female parent, i.e. they were not siblings. To investigate further the genetic differences between the two Fair Isle birds, a different mitochondrial gene (cytochrome b, or *cytb*) was sequenced. The two Fair Isle birds were 4 bp different over 1005 bp of this gene, which confirms that they were not siblings. The Norwegian bird had not been sequenced at the *cytb* locus, but 302 bp of *cytb* had been sequenced from another British Swinhoe's, one of the famous 'Tyne petrels' (Dawson 1992; Cubitt 1995). The Tynemouth Swinhoe's, the two Fair Isle birds, and also a South Korean bird previously sequenced by Rob Dawson and David Parkin (University of Nottingham) were all identical over this short stretch of sequence.

In summary, the genetic analysis confirms that the two Fair Isle birds were both males, and that they did not share the same female parent. The implication is that whatever the origins of Swinhoe's Storm-petrels in the North Atlantic, they are derived from more than one female ancestor. The biometrics and vocalisations suggest that sexing this species using wing length is not necessarily reliable but that doing so using a chatter-call sonogram is more likely to be accurate.

Acknowledgments

We are grateful to Alan Lewis for his digital sound recording.

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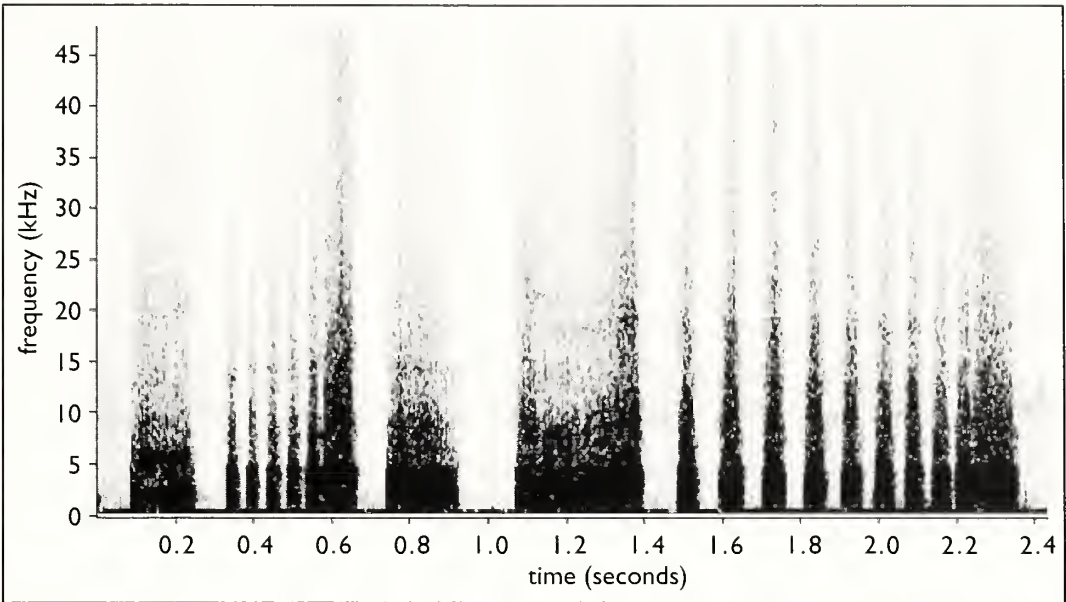


Fig. 1. Sonogram of Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis* chatter call (bird 2), Fair Isle, August 2013. Sonogram created using Syrinx Software (Burt 2013). Each dark spike represents one note in the call sequence.

Table 2. DNA sequence NCBI accession numbers of two Swinhoe's Storm-petrels *Oceanodroma monorhis* trapped in 2013 on Fair Isle, Shetland, and the 1991 Tynemouth Swinhoe's.

	COI	Cytb
Bird 1 Fair Isle – NB84930	HG975291	HG975293
Bird 2 Fair Isle – NB84938	HG975292	HG975294
Tynemouth Swinhoe's	–	HG975295

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Play-like behaviour from juvenile harrier in Cambridgeshire

In the mid afternoon of 26th October 2013, together with Tim Wilson, I visited the Ouse Washes RSPB reserve in Cambridgeshire. There, for two hours, we watched a juvenile female Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius*. This striking bird made fascinating viewing for us, not only because of the intrigue over its identification but also because of the behaviour that we witnessed.

From a hide, I saw it flying into the wind down the adjacent 'wash' and drains while carrying in its talons what looked at first sight to be a prey item – but upon closer inspection through a telescope turned out to be a clod of soil and vegetation, approximately 10 cm in diameter (plates 335 & 336). After a flight of about 100 m at a height of around 10 m, it would suddenly alight on the ground and periodically agitate the 'prey'

with its beak. After a few minutes, it would then fly off for a further sally before landing and repeating the 'roughing up' of the clod. Sometimes, as a variation, it would fly off without the clod, before returning to collect it and thereafter repeating the actions. In all, I watched it flying with the clod on about five occasions over a period of about 30 minutes. Thereafter, it seemed to lose interest in the clod, undertaking what appeared to be more serious attempts to catch live prey, unsuccessfully ambushing some Mallards *Anas platyrhynchos* and duelling aggressively with a Marsh Harrier *C. aeruginosus*. A few days later, both the ringtail in question and a standard juvenile Hen Harrier were seen by other observers to 'play' together with a clump of dark weedy grass in the same vicinity, apparently sharing their 'prey' (see <http://backinbirdland.blogspot.co.uk/2013/11/northern-harrier-ouse-washes-rspb.html?m=1>).

These Ouse Washes harriers showed consistent play-like learning behaviour with a surrogate food item. Raptors are well known to conduct play activities with various objects (see Hewitt 2013 for a review). In the mid 1970s, K. L. Bildstein studied Northern Harriers in Ohio, USA, and found that occasionally they pounced upon corn cobs picked up from a field, carried them and dropped and caught them in flight. These cobs were shown to be selected on the basis of size, typically being equivalent to that of the harriers' usual mammalian prey (Bildstein 1980). The harrier I observed did not undertake the full 'drop-catch' repertoire (Hewitt 2013), but it might have been practising to fly with a prey-sized cargo in what were quite blustery conditions.

Acknowledgments

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335. Juvenile Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius* carrying its 'play-prey' clod over the Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, October 2013.

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336. Juvenile Northern Harrier *Circus cyaneus hudsonius* on the ground subduing in its talons its 'play-prey' clod, Ouse Washes, Cambridgeshire, October 2013.

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Obituary

James Francis Monk (1915–2014)

James Monk may have been little known to many *BB* readers but, despite his life as a busy medical doctor, for many years he played a significant role in the development of scientific ornithology in Britain, mainly through his involvement with the British Ornithologists' Union. With an easy manner he was calm and unflappable, hard-working and highly competent.

James was born in 1915 in Delhi, the son of a missionary teacher. He was educated at Winchester College, followed by Trinity College, Oxford, where he read medicine (or physiology as it was then, a subject which he regarded as 'quite useless'). In the midst of his course, he was called up in 1942, and spent four years in the Royal Army Medical Corps, serving in Tunisia, Sicily and through Italy. Research on malaria in servicemen earned him a DM from Oxford, and led to publications in the *British Medical Journal* and elsewhere. He entered full-time General Practice in 1947 at Goring-on-Thames, in Oxfordshire, where he lived for the rest of his life.

Ornithology was his hobby. At school, Dick Cornwallis was the only other pupil who shared his interest; they became great friends and went birdwatching together. In Oxford, W. B. Alexander (WBA) taught James how to count and ring birds and H. N. Southern taught him bird songs. He was friendly with a fellow bird-minded student, Hugh Elliott, and joined both the BTO and the Oxford Ornithological Society, of which he became Secretary. During the war, in Tunisia, James found himself with so few patients that he could spend most of his time birdwatching. This was well before the halcyon days of field guides, but in answer to a plea for help, WBA sent him a copy of Whittaker's two-volume *Birds of Tunisia*, together with an apologetic request for reimbursement of the cost, a princely five guineas. James later presented these volumes to the Alexander Library in Oxford (with an inscription on their history).

James's wartime postings led to a

particular interest in bird migration, which was followed, back home, by a close friendship with Reg Moreau, then editor of the *Ibis*, the journal of the BOU. James authored or co-authored several papers on bird migration in various parts of southern Europe and North Africa. He was the first to analyse Nest Record Cards from the BTO, leading to a paper on the breeding of Greenfinches *Chloris chloris*, which had the distinction of being the first paper in the new journal, *Bird Study*, in 1954 (1: 2–14). James developed a fascination with Wrynecks *Jynx torquilla*, which still bred in the Goring area into the 1950s. Under the auspices of the BTO, he organised a national survey, which led to two further papers in *Bird Study*, the last describing the past and current status of the Wryneck in Britain (*Bird Study* 10: 112–132).

Over a period of 32 years James held every office in the BOU except Treasurer, serving as



Jeremy Greenwood

337. James Monk, with his wife Diana, in April 2011.

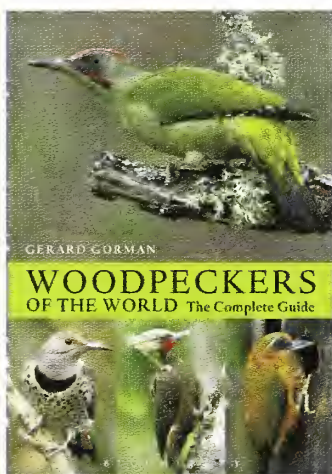
Assistant Editor (1956–60), then Editor of the *Ibis* (1960–66), Honorary Secretary (1967–72), Vice-President (1978–82), and finally President (1983–87). He took over from Reg Moreau as editor of the *Ibis* at a time when ornithological research was expanding rapidly and, like his predecessor, had the enviable ability to turn dull and turgid scientific writing into interesting, succinct and readable text. During a period when James had about 3,000 patients on his list, his *Ibis* ‘hobby’ absorbed much of his spare time, and during his years as editor, his young daughter pinned a notice on his study door which read: ‘Ibis going on in here. Please knock before going in. Thank-you.’ When Reg Moreau died in 1970, James undertook to finish and see through publication Moreau’s classic book on *The Palearctic-African Bird Migration Systems* (1972). In 1975, under his initiative but following a

suggestion from Bill Bourne, the BOU started a checklist series, which James edited for 13 years, and which at that time filled a vacant niche in the ornithological literature. James was also heavily involved with the British Ornithologists’ Club, acting as Chairman for four years (1968–71), and then editor of its *Bulletin* for 15 years (1976–90). No-one was more deserving of the BOU’s Union Medal, awarded in 1988 ‘in recognition of eminent services to ornithology’. James died peacefully on 8th May 2014, aged 98 years, and was survived by his wife Diana, four children, 11 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Ian Newton

Compiled with help from recordings made by Jeremy Greenwood of an interview with James Monk in 2011, to be placed in the BTO archives.

Reviews



Woodpeckers of the World: the complete guide

By Gerard Gorman

Bloomsbury, 2014

Hbk, 528pp; c. 750 colour photographs, distribution maps

ISBN 978-1-4081-4715-3 Subbuteo code M24079

£35.00 **BB Bookshop price £31.50**

This is the first definitive photographic guide to the woodpeckers of the world.

Until now, apart from

Handbook of the Birds of the World, the two standard works on the family have been Short’s *Woodpeckers of the World* (Delaware Museum, 1982) and Winkler *et al.*’s *Woodpeckers: an identification guide to the woodpeckers of the world* (Pica Press, 1995). Back in 1995 just 214 species were recognised, and by 2002 only two more were included in *HBW*. This new book, however, includes 239 species – almost completely in line with the IOC taxonomy, but at odds with other taxonomic treatments.

In recent years there has been a surge in splitting of some groups. For example, within the Oriental region six additional species have been

proposed within the genus *Chrysocolaptes*, while in the Neotropics a further five are being suggested within the genus *Piculus*. For the latter group, the author has liaised with Brazilian ornithologists to agree English names – although it remains to be seen whether these will be more widely accepted. Closer to home, the decision to treat the Iberian race of Green Woodpecker *Picus viridis* as a full species, Iberian Green Woodpecker *P. sharpei*, will surprise a few – although not if you follow IOC.

Two potentially extinct species are included: Imperial *Campephilus imperialis* and Ivory-billed Woodpecker *C. principalis* (last seen reliably in 1956 and 1987 respectively). No illustration of either species is included, which is unfortunate as there are well-prepared museum specimens that could have been shown.

The format and presentation is similar to *Owls*

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of the World – a sister volume in the expanding Helm Photographic Guides series. A 20-page introduction provides a brief overview to the woodpecker family, which is liberally illustrated. The species texts are divided into the 29 genera, which are treated separately. This really works well to emphasise how the various groupings differ from each other while being superficially similar. Individual species accounts review identification, vocalisations (and drumming), status, habitat, range, taxonomy and racial variation and food. A colour distribution map is provided for each species.

For most readers the big draw will be the high-quality photographs that illustrate each species.

Over 200 photographers supplied images for the book and it is hard to find a page that does not include a photograph. The quality is outstanding and there is not a single photograph I would have rejected. A big effort has been made to find images of both sexes for dimorphic species, and in some cases juveniles are also shown. References are mostly restricted to those published since 2002, but this still results in details of about 350 papers.

This is a really attractive book, which is well designed and provides concise information without compromising on quality.

Keith Betton



H is for Hawk

By Helen Macdonald

Jonathan Cape, 2014

Hbk, 300pp

ISBN 978-0-224-09700-0 Subbuteo code M24336

£14.99 **BB Bookshop price £13.50**

I have rarely looked forward so keenly to the publication of a book. It is about that haunting bird – the

Northern Goshawk *Accipiter gentilis* – and about the ever-intriguing author T. H. White, by a renowned academic and poetic mind. The subject matter was always likely to be painful, in places, as the author describes how she seeks solace in a hawk, following a shattering bereavement. I couldn't be sure what I would find out about White, as she delves deep into a life that has been subject to much rumour and speculation. Macdonald compares notes on her hawk-training experience with White. She works from the text of his classic book *The Goshawk*, written in the 1930s (though not published until 1951), and produces new insights on the man based on research in his archive, held at the University of Texas.

I found much of this analysis fascinating, and moving. White was a complex figure, brutalised in childhood, apt to escape from humanity and into a world of other creatures and Arthurian fantasy. Like White, Macdonald here attempts to withdraw from the world, and the pain of her father's death, into a life in which the lines between her and the hawk become blurred. As it did for White, this absorbing experience produces much wisdom and some interesting conclusions, many of them original and sometimes startling. The enigmatic Goshawk is, on the one hand, the most elusive,

contrary of creatures, and on the other a bird you can live with. Macdonald keeps Mabel in her living room. She carries the hawk around Cambridge, to see and overcome fear of the sights. There are insights on the bird that you could only get from such proximity. Who knew that Goshawks could have a playful side, or be excited by pictures of gamebirds in books?

In captivity Goshawks have good days and bad days, can be inclined to truculence or co-operation, depending on mood, hunger, DNA. It is also a species you can work with, once it overcomes its fear, and associates the handler – and only the handler – with food. When that bond breaks, the Goshawk is off.

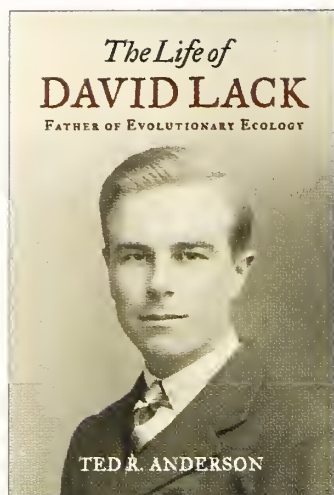
Macdonald quotes scientist and falconer Professor Tom Cade, who once described falconry as 'high-intensity birdwatching'. She makes a case that it's more than that, but there are also elements that are missing. Her exposition of a winter spent hawking wintry East Anglian fields doesn't venture into the issues around Goshawks that interest me most. Even when Mabel decides to trespass in and plunder a couple of pheasant pens, the wider ramifications of this obvious hazard for her kind are not dwelt on. Nor will the book tell the birding reader much about how to find Goshawks in the wild state, or hint at why there are still so few wild ones in those lowland fields. T. H. White wasn't diverted by these questions either. Perhaps that is the point.

Conor Jameson

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The Life of David Lack: father of evolutionary ecology

By Ted R. Anderson

Oxford University Press, 2013

Hbk, 246pp; 19 black-and-white photos and illustrations

ISBN 978-0-19-992264-2 Subbuteo code M24175

£37.50 **BB Bookshop price £33.75**

This modest little book combines a biography of David Lack with a critical review of his

scientific work. The first few chapters describe his early life at home and at Gresham's School in Norfolk – the *alma mater* of an array of the pre-war intelligentsia and incidentally of more than its fair share of past and present ornithologists. Moving to university at Cambridge, he took the opportunity to participate in expeditions to St Kilda, Bear Island, Iceland and East Greenland, before moving to a job teaching at Dartington School in Devon. Here he continued his scientific work, studying the Robin *Erithacus rubecula* and producing one of the first detailed scientific studies of a small passerine. He then took time out from teaching to visit the Galapagos, where he studied a range of birds, but especially the finches, about which he wrote a major analytical review. The Second World War then intervened, and he spent much of his time helping with the installation and management of radar facilities – and (inevitably) spending his limited free time birdwatching. This familiarity with radar led to pioneering research into its value in the study of avian migration.

The book then moves away from a biographical stance to begin the review of Lack's career at Oxford University as founder and head of the Edward Grey Institute of Field Ornithology. (It is amusing that when Anderson is describing Lack's private life, he often refers to him as 'David', but for the scientific aspects of his life, he invariably

uses the more formal 'Lack'.) There follows a detailed summary of the key developments in Lack's career, building this around chapters related to his major books: *The Natural Regulation of Animal Numbers*, *Population Studies of Birds*, *Ecological Adaptations for Breeding in Birds*, *Ecological Isolation in Birds* – all of which were groundbreaking texts. In among this is one of the better histories of the 'Group Selection' controversy which raged in the early 1960s.

The final chapters include 'potted biographies' of many of Lack's colleagues and students. Oxford must have been an awesome place to work in the 1950s and 1960s: Cain, Elton, Ford, Kettlewell, Lack, Moreau, Sheppard, Southern, Tinbergen – all overseen by the benign Alistair Hardy! And the list of students reads like a roll of honour of British (indeed, global) ornithology: P. R. Evans, Hinde, Lockie, Newton, Perrins, Safriel, Snow, Stonehouse and many more. He also founded the annual winter conference in Oxford for undergraduate and postgraduate students, many of whom made their first public talks at this event. A committed Christian, Lack was always kind and generous at these meetings.

This book was a delight to read, and is warmly recommended to anyone interested in the life story of one of Britain's greatest ornithologists and his central role in the development of field ornithology in Britain during the middle of the twentieth century.

David Parkin

Facing Extinction: the world's rarest birds and the race to save them (2nd edn)

By Paul F. Donald, Nigel J. Collar, Stuart J. Marsden and Deborah J. Pain

Christopher Helm, 2013. Pbk, 320pp; colour and black-and-white illustrations

ISBN 978-1-4081-8966-5 Subbuteo code M21739. £25.00 **BB Bookshop price £22.50**

This excellent book was first reviewed in *BB* in 2010 (see *Brit. Birds* 103: 739–740). In the three years since the first edition, the stories of some of the world's rarest birds have changed dramatically, either because of better knowledge of their status and threats or because of new developments in the race to save them, so several of the key chapters – notably those on the Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Calidris pygmeus*, the Asian Gyps vultures and the Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* – have been substantially updated.

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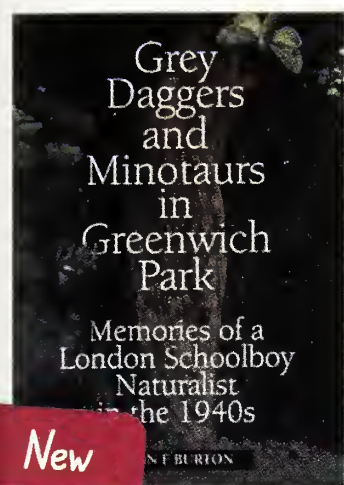


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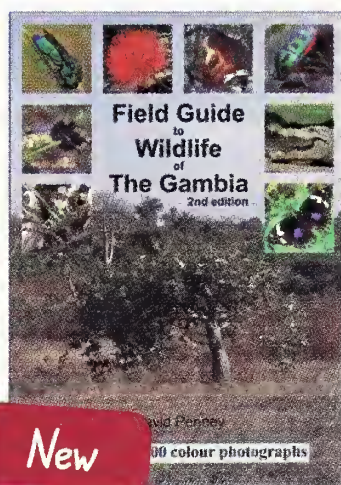
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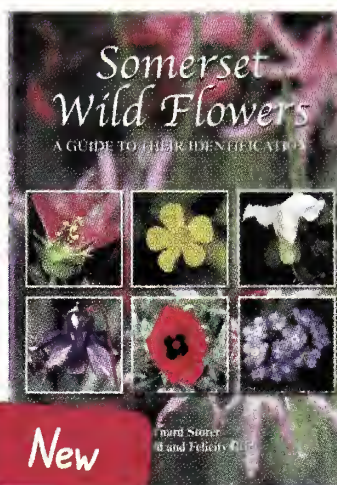
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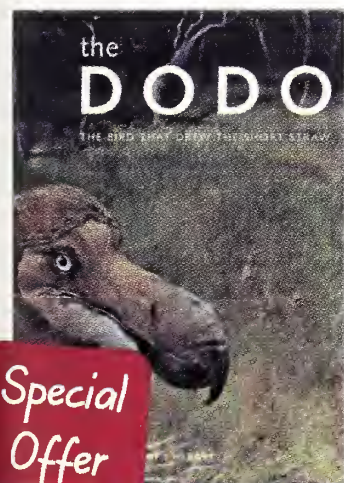
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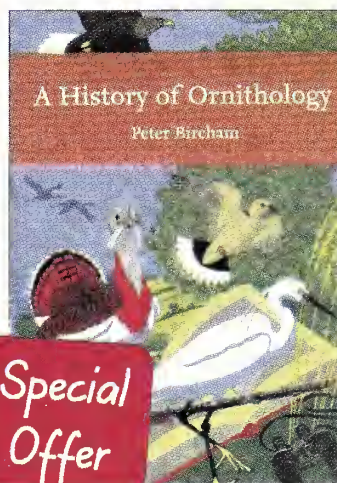
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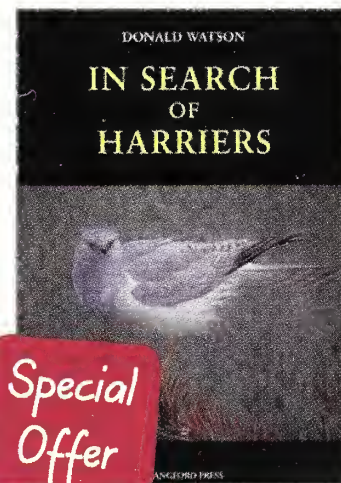
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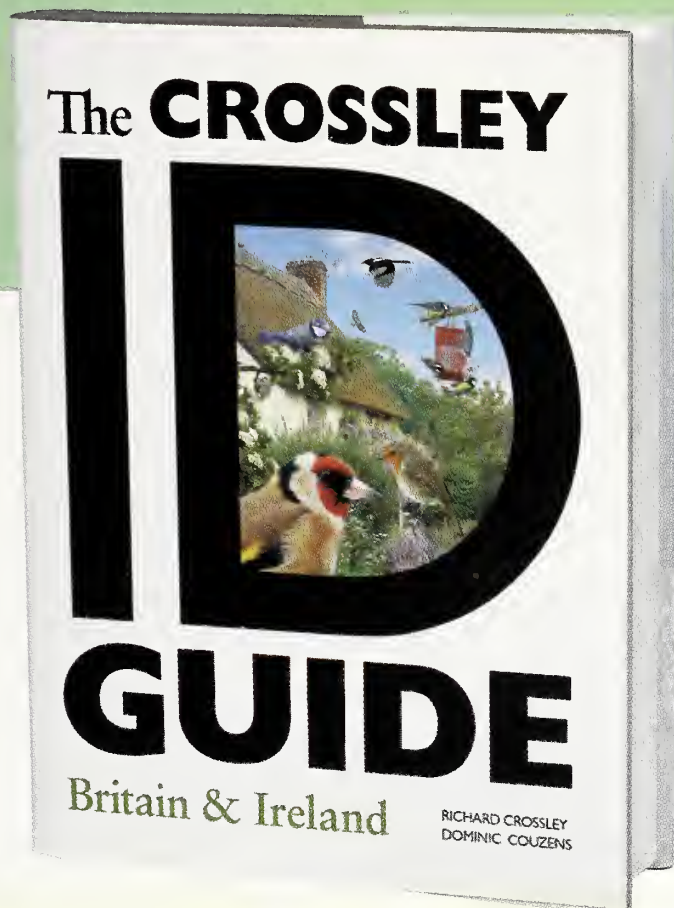
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